MADAME SANS-GENE

VICTORIEN SARDOU

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MADAME SANS-GÊNE

("MADAME DON'T-CARE")

FOUNDED ON THE PLAY BY

VICTORIEN SARDOU AND EMILE MOREAU

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

ISAAC GEORGE REED, JR.

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Madame Sans-Gene.

PUBLISHERS' NOTICE.

The career of Napoleon Bonaparte has hitherto been treated as an historical narrative. In this book Messrs. Sardou and Moreau have woven the facts of history into a drama of most intense interest. Here is shown the many-sided character of the First Napoleon,—as the adventurer, the lover, the warrior, the Emperor;—together with the thrilling events transpiring on the eve of that great revolution upon the waves of which he was carried to the summit of the mountain of fame. The immortal and inimitable Catherine Upscher, who, because of her free and easy manners, and because she cares for nothing and fears nothing, has been nick-named "Madame Sans-Gêne," lends to this historical romance an air of refreshing comedy and brightness that fully accounts for the many friendly criticisms which recommend this book as a study of Napoleon and his times.

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MADAME SANS-GENE.

BOOK FIRST.

THE LAUNDRESS.

CHAPTER I.

THE BALL AND THE FRICASSÉE.

In the Rue de Bondy lamps, lighted but smoking, showed the way to a popular ball, known as "The Waux-Hall."

This fantastically named affair was directed by an artist of "The Theater of Arts," Citizen Joly.

The time was during the great days of July, 1792, when Louis XVI. was still called king, but his head, which had in reality been doomed to the axe since June 20, rested uneasily on his shoulders.

It was a time of Revolution. Revolution was in the very air. Revolution thundered through the streets.

Three men, Robespierre, Marat and Barbaroux, had held a secret conclave, in which, though they had not agreed in the choice of a chief, a dictator, a "Friend of the People," they had determined to make a decisive attack on the royal family, who were practically prisoners in the palace of the Tuileries.

Meanwhile Paris waited for the troops from Marseilles to give the signal for revolt.

And meantime the Prussian king and the Austrian emperor prepared to throw themselves on France, which they regarded as an easy prey—a nation already self-overthrown. The Prince of Brunswick, generalissimo of the royal and imperial armies, had issued from Coblenz a manifesto threatening Paris with dire vengeance if it dared to offer violence or outrage to "their majesties King Louis XVI. or the Queen Marie Antoinette," but Paris merely defied the prince and organized the uprising of the tenth of August.

Still, the city kept on enjoying itself; for Paris is a volcano with two craters—one of passion and one of pleasure.

Men armed themselves in the suburbs; they talked noisily in clubs; cartridges were distributed to the national guard, but, all the same, men and women enjoyed themselves and danced.

On the still fresh ruins of the grim Bastille, now demolished forever, some wag had placed a placard, "One can dance here." And sometimes they did dance there. It was one way of showing that the ancient régime had forever disappeared.

The revolution was accomplished amid song and dance—the Marseillaise and the Carmagnole.

Scores of balls were taking place every night, and one of the gayest and most popular was the Waux-Hall.

The dancing, like the dressing, at these balls was a mixture of the old and the new. The minuet the gavotte and the pavané were mingled with the rigaudon, the trénitz, the monaco, and that favorite of favorites, the fricassée.

On the large floor of the Waux-Hall, one night in the last week of July, there was a vast crowd, and everybody was enjoying himself or herself hugely.

The women were gayly attired, active and mostly young. The men were vigorous. The costumes were various. Short breeches, with wig, French coat and stockings, were in evidence, alongside of the long trousers introduced with the revolution. (It may be remarked here, *en passant*, that the now famous term *sans-cullottes*, used to designate "the patriots," simply means that they did not wear the ordinary covering of the legs.)

There were many uniforms at the ball. For numbers of the National Guards were present, who were ready at the first drum call to begin the overture of revolution by a dance, not at the Waux-Hall, but the Tuileries—a dance around the throne.

And among these uniforms, moving proudly and showing himself to advantage, was a tall, muscular young man, in face both strong and gentle, and wearing, like a fop, the showy costume of the French guard, with the red and blue cockade of the city of Paris. A silver braid on his sleeve denoted his rank. He had been a sergeant in the city militia before the disbanding of the French guards.

He passed twice or thrice before a girl, pretty and buxom, with clear blue eyes, who was not dancing at the time. The handsome guardsman looked wistfully at, but hesitated to approach her, though his comrades encouraged him. She eyed him scornfully.

"Go on, Lefebvre," said one of his companions to the guardsman; "the place is not impregnable."

"Perhaps," laughed another of his companions, "she has herself opened a breach ere this."

"And," cried a third, "if you don't attempt it, I will myself."

"You can see, Lefebvre," said the man who had first spoken, "that it is you she is looking at. Ask her to dance the fricassée with you."

Lefebvre was silent. He seemed afraid to address the fresh young woman, who, though she was by no means icy, was not one whit abashed.

"Do you really think I have a chance, Bernadotte?" said Lefebvre, finally, to the last speaker. "Well, by heaven, a French soldier never retreats from an enemy or a pretty woman. *Ma foi!* I *will* make the attack."

And, leaving his companions, Sergeant Lefebvre advanced to the pretty girl, whose eyes began to flash angrily, for she had heard the remarks about her. She stood, bracing herself ready to receive him in fine fashion.

"Listen," she said to a girl standing beside her, "you will hear me teach those impertinent guards whether or no I have really made an opening for them." And she rose quickly, eyes flashing, hands on her hips, tongue ready, prepared for action.

The sergeant, on his part, thought deeds would count more than words. So, extending his arms, he seized the young woman by the waist, and, attempting to kiss her neck, said:

"Mademoiselle, will you dance the fricassée?"

The sergeant had been quick, but the girl was quicker. She freed herself from the sergeant's half-embrace, and stretching out her hand in the direction of his cheek, slapped it heartily, saying merrily, as well as almost furiously, "Take that, my boy! *That's* your fricassée."

The sergeant fell back, rubbed his cheek vigorously, then absolutely blushed; finally, politely lifting his three-cornered hat, said, with a gallant air: "Mademoiselle, I humbly ask your pardon."

"Oh," said the girl, her anger gone, "there's no offense, my lad; I have merely given you a lesson. Another time you'll know with whom you are dealing." Then, turning to the women round her, she said, *sotto voce:* "He's not so bad—that guardsman."

Bernadotte meantime (who had been jealous of Lefebvre when he took his advice and approached the pretty girl, but had smiled when he saw him slapped) now took his arm, exclaiming: "Come with us; nobody wants to dance with you, you see, Lefebvre. Perhaps," he continued, with a look at the girl, "perhaps, after all, mademoiselle does not know how to dance the fricassée."

Up spoke the girl quickly: "What's that you say? I *can* dance the fricassée, and I will, when I choose, but not with you" (looking at Bernadotte); "but" (glancing at Lefebvre) "if your comrade were to ask me, like a gentleman, I should be glad to dance a measure with him. There is no ill-feeling between us, is there, sergeant?" she asked, turning to Lefebvre, and extending her hand.

"Ill-feeling!" exclaimed Lefebvre; "Surely not. Yet I again ask your pardon, mademoiselle, though it was more my companions' fault, and Bernadotte's there, than my own. I got simply what I deserved."

The girl interrupted him.

"By your accent," she said, "you must be an Alsatian."

"I am a native of the Upper-Rhine—at Ruffach," replied Lefebvre.

"*Ciël!* what luck!" ejaculated the girl; "I am from St. Amarin."

"My countrywoman," said the man.

"My countryman," said the woman. "Strange," she continued, "how people do come across each other."

"And you are called?" asked the man.

"Catherine," said the woman; "Catherine Upscher—laundress—Rue Royal, corner of Rue Orties-Saint-Honoré."

"While I am Lefebvre, ex-sergeant of the guards," said the man; "now in the militia."

"*Tres bien!*" spoke up the laundress; "later on, countryman, we will learn more about each other; but just now the fricassée calls us, sergeant."

And, without further ado, taking his hand she led him among the maze of dancers.

While the two danced, a pale, wan-faced young man, with long hair worn over dog-like eyes, quiet and subtle in bearing, with a coat like a cassock, exclaimed: "What! Catherine among the guards!"

Sergeant Bernadotte overheard this remark. "Do you know this Catherine?" he asked.

"Yes, I assure you!" replied the pale-faced youth; "she is my laundress. A good girl, and a virtuous, with an open heart and a sharp tongue. Throughout the quarter she is known to every one as Madame Don't Care—Madame Sans Gêne—and she has earned the title by her bold words and decided ways."

The orchestra now grew louder. The dancers grew more lively, and all chance for conversation was lost in the wild tumult of the fricassée.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAGICIAN AND THE PREDICTION—THE MAN WITH A STAR.

When the dance was ended Sergeant Lefebvre led his countrywoman to her place. There was peace between them. They talked like old friends, they walked arm in arm, like young lovers.

Lefebvre to insure the continuance of good humor proposed refreshments.

"Agreed," replied Catherine. "I do not stand on ceremony. You look like a good sort of fellow, and assuredly I shall not refuse your politeness, especially as the fricassée makes one thirsty. Let us sit down here," taking seats at one of the tables. Lefebvre was charmed at the turn things were taking. He hesitated a moment, however, before seating himself.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Catherine, quite brusquely.

"Look you," answered her escort, looking around him at his companions, and speaking with some embarrassment, "it is this: we guardsmen and militiamen do not like to act churlishly—like Switzers."

"Oh," said she, "I understand—your comrades—you wish to ask them to join us. Well, do so, if you will, or do you want me to call them?"

And, without waiting for his reply, she mounted a green wooden bench near the table, and arranging her pretty hands around her pretty mouth, like a speaking trumpet, she called to the three guardsmen who stood a little distance off, amusing themselves at the actions of the couple.

"Oho! lads," she cried, "come over here. Don't be afraid! We won't eat you. Besides, if you only watch us drinking, without drinking yourselves, you will get the blues."

The three guardsmen responded gayly to the friendly invitation—all but Bernadotte, who lingered behind.

"What! you're surely not going?" said one of the other two to Bernadotte.

"No, but I want to talk with yonder citizen," was the reply, with a glance toward the young man already alluded to, with the long frock and the dog-like eyes.

Bernadotte spoke rather crossly. He was in reality somewhat jealous already of Lefebvre's success with the pretty laundress.

Catherine had caught Bernadotte's glance at the wan-faced young man.

"Oh, he's not in the way," she said; "I know him and he knows me. Is it not so, Citizen Fouché?"

The party thus addressed came forward to the table where Catherine and Lefebvre were seated—the latter having ordered warm wines and pastry—and said, as he saluted them: "Since Mademoiselle Catherine desires, I come gladly. For I love to find myself among the brave defenders of our city."

Then the four guardsmen and Fouché sat down, and, having filled their glasses, they drank together. But Catherine and Lefebvre, among other quiet gallantries, drank, without being noticed, from the same glass.

Then Lefebvre, growing bolder, tried to kiss her, but Catherine drew back. "No kiss, my countryman—at least, not yet. I will laugh with you, dance with you, drink with you, but no more."

Fouché, noticing this little episode, said laughingly to Lefebvre: "One would scarcely look for such modesty in a washerwoman. But in such matters she is not very yielding—our Mademoiselle Sans Géne."

"Come, Citizen Fouché," cried Catherine quickly; "you know me well—I have done your laundry work—in the three months since you came from Nantes, has any one the right to say anything against me?"

"No," answered Fouché, "no one—nothing."

"Right," said Catherine. "Mark me, friends," she continued, "I am always ready to play like this; to dance a fricassée now and then. I will even drink with good lads like these; but no one in Paris can boast that he has ever crossed the threshold of my room. My workshop is open to the world; but to my bedchamber there is only one man who shall ever have the key."

"And who may be that lucky man?" asked Sergeant Lefebvre, twirling his mustache.

"My husband," answered Catherine haughtily; then clicking her glass against Lefebvre's she asked laughingly: "and in that case, countryman, what would you have to say?"

"Say," replied Lefebvre, still twirling his mustache, "I should say that it were not such a bad thing for him. To *your* health, but *not to* his, mam'selle," he added.

"Sir, to yours," said Catherine, draining her glass; "and here's to the fulfillment of your wishes," she added meaningly.

Then they all drank gayly, laughing over this last sally.

And while thus engaged a singular sight presented itself. A strange figure with a pointed cap, and a long black robe, spangled with stars of silver, and crescents of a bluish hue, and comets with long tails, moved among the tables like a specter.

Bernadotte recognized this specter at once, and located him. "Look," he cried," it is Fortunatus, the magician." Then he cried out loudly: "Who wants to have his fortune told?"

Every ball in those days had its sorcerer, its card-reader, its fortune-teller, who revealed the past and foretold the future for five sous. In such an excited political period as this, preceeding the tenth of August, when the old order of things was giving way to the new with fairy-like rapidity, naturally everybody believed in the unbelievable, everybody had faith in the marvelous. Cagliostro with his glass, Mesmer with his trough, had overturned the heads of the aristocrats, while the people had confidence in the soothsayers of the crossroads, and the astrologers of the taverns. As for Catherine, the laundress, she was now burning to know the future, for it seemed to her that this meeting to-night with the handsome sergeant was destined to alter her whole life. She was about to ask Lefebvre to call Fortunatus, and question him, when the sorcerer himself turned to answer some question proposed by a group of three men seated at a table opposite.

"Let us first hear what he has to say to them," she whispered.

"Ah!" said Bernadotte, looking at the group opposite; "I know one of them. He is a Burgundian called Andoche Junot."

"I know another," said Lefebvre; "he is an aristocrat called Pierre de Marmont. He too is a Burgundian."

"But the third one," said Fouché, "that lean young man with the deep-set eyes, and the dark complexion? I am sure I have seen him before. Who is he? where have I seen him?"

"Perhaps in my workroom," said the laundress, with the least bit of a blush. "He is an artillery officer, who has laid down his commission—he expects another appointment I believe—he lives near me—in the Rue Royal-Saint-Roche, at the Hotel des Patriotes."

"Ah! then he is a Corsican," cried Fouché. "All the Corsicans live at that hotel. He is an odd man, this client of yours—I remember his name now. It's a strange one—Berna—Buna—Bina—Bona——"

"Bonaparte," said Catherine.

"Yes, that's it—Bonaparte—Timoleon Bonaparte—is it not?"

"No; Napoleon Bonaparte," said Catherine. "He is a wise youth, and a rather sad one," she continued; "who impresses every man he meets."

"Well," muttered Fouché, "if ever he becomes anybody, or gets anything, he ought to change his name. But listen! the sorcerer Fortunatus is speaking. What can he be saying to them?"

The four guardsmen at once grew silent and listened with all their ears, at one table, to what was said to the group of three at the table opposite. As for Catherine, she became visibly affected by the presence of the sorcerer, and said earnestly, though in a whisper, to Lefebvre: "I wish he would prophesy good luck for Bonaparte. He is such a good young man; he is not rich yet; he supports four brothers and his sisters. Besides," she continued, assuming a mercantile manner, "he owes me for several washings, and I have never yet been able even to present his bill."

Fortunatus meanwhile was balancing his pointed hat, and gravely reading the outstretched hand of the young man whom Bernadotte had called Junot.

"Thy career shall be bright and well rounded," he said, in a deep, low voice. "Thou shalt be a great man's friend—thou shalt triumph with him gloriously—thy head shalt bear a ducal crown—thou shalt triumph in the South."

"Bravo!" cried Junot, "thou art consoling to a soldier. But, after all my good fortune, how shall I die?" he asked.

"Thou shalt die mad," answered the sorcerer in his hollow tones.

"The devil!" cried the second of the three at the table, the one whom Lefebvre had called Marmont. "Shall I go mad, too?"

"No," answered the soothsayer; "thou shalt live for thy own shame and thy country's ruin. After a life of glory, thou shalt desert thy master, betray thy country, and become a Judas."

Marmont sneered. "Thou flatterest me, false prophet," he cried to the fortune-teller. Then looking toward Bonaparte he asked the magician to foretell his destiny.

But Bonaparte drew away his hand and said proudly: "I have no wish to be told the future, for I know it." He spoke with an accent of profound conviction. Then, turning to his friends, he pointed to the stars, visible at one point through the tent-like covering of the dance-hall, above the wall that enclosed it. "Do you see that star up there?" he cried in a resounding voice. "No? you see it not. But I see it—that is enough for me—that is *my* star."

The sorcerer moved on, and, as Catherine beckoned to him, he approached her group. "Profit by your youth," he said abruptly to two of the guardsmen, "for your days are numbered."

"But where are we to die?" asked one of the young men, who afterward was shot down by the Swiss guards, a martyr to liberty.

"On the steps of a palace," was the reply.

"What greatness!" exclaimed Bernadotte, "death in a tragedy and in a palace—can I not share it?"

"No," answered the sorcerer, "thou shalt die in peace. Thou shalt mount a throne, disown thy flag, war with thy former companions in arms, and lie in a foreign grave, beside an icy sea."

"What then is left for me?" asked Lefebvre of the fortune-teller.

"You shall marry the woman you love," answered Fortunatus; "you shall lead a mighty army, and your name shall be a synonym for faith and courage."

Lefebvre smiled proudly. But now Catherine, the laundress, never before abashed, asked of Fortunatus timidly: "I—sir magician—what shall become of me?"

"As for you, mademoiselle," said the amateur fortune-teller, smiling kindly on the almost trembling girl, "you shall marry the man you love."

Then Lefebvre looked at Catherine, and unconsciously Catherine looked at Lefebvre.

"And you shall be a duchess," added the sorcerer, still smiling.

"Then I must hurry and become a duke," cried Lefebvre merrily yet meaningly. "There, magician," he said, trying to impede the progress of Fortunatus, "stop and complete your prophecy. Tell me if I shall marry Catherine here, and that when man and wife we shall become duke and duchess."

He really seemed anxious to have the fortune-teller prophesy in detail as he wished, and even Catherine seemed to be not indifferent. But Fortunatus, still smiling kindly on the couple, passed on and vanished in the crowd.

Fouché looked after him. "After all," he said, "the magician has little imagination—at least, not enough left for *me*. He predicted for me nothing. Am I then to be nobody?"

"You!" said Catherine, "why, you look like a curate already. What would you like to be?"

"Oh, I am at present an enemy of tyrants," answered Fouché, "but I would really like to be Minister of Police."

"You will get there," said Catherine, with a meaning look and a laugh. "You are the devil to find out what is going on."

"Yes," retorted Fouché, "I shall be Minister of Police when you are a duchess." He smiled as he spoke, and the smile seemed in itself a prophecy.

By this time the ball was over. The party arose, laughing at the memory of the magician and his magic.

Lefebvre offered Catherine his arm to escort her to her workroom, and in front of the couple walked homeward the three friends, Junot, Marmont and Napoleon Bonaparte—the latter a little apart from his companions, silent and grave.

But ever and anon he raised his eyes heavenward as if seeking among its shining hosts to see his star—the star of destiny—his star alone.

CHAPTER III.

ROYALTY'S LAST NIGHT AND CATHERINE'S WEDDING GIFT.

THE tenth of August fell on a Friday, and the weather had been fine. At midnight the moon shed its luster on the town. Paris had been sleeping for some time past with hand on sword and one eye open, ready to rise at the very first alarm. The city was a furnace—the revolution boiled—the Marseilles troops had arrived, singing the Marseillaise.

Meanwhile the nobles barricaded the palaces, and established in the Tuileries a garrison of Swiss guards. They were called by the citizens the Chevaliers du Poignard, in allusion to an incident at a banquet in October when the national cockade had been trampled under foot.

The revolution was really born on the tenth day, or ninth night, of August. It was a "spontaneous" uprising of a people. No one man directed it—not Marat, who was in his cave; not Danton, who was asleep with Camille Desmoulins; not Robespierre, who lived apart; not Barbaroux, who declined to lead the Marseillaise; not Santerre, who only figured in the fight when it was half over.

August tenth saw a nameless, headless insurrection—a battle without a commander—yet with a mob for general, and with a nation for heroes.

The movement began directly after midnight on the starlit night of the ninth of August. The tocsin gave the signal, and, by the dramatic retribution of Providence, the same big bell, that of the clock of St. Germain-d'Auxerrois, which had chimed for the massacre of St. Bartholomew and the downfall of the Huguenots, now sounded the death-knell of monarchy.

Mademoiselle Sans-Gêne heard the bell, the tocsin, and the call to arms.

She was among the first to put her pretty face and nose out of the window, to see what was going on. Dressed in a dainty but scanty petticoat, a thin lace covering over her fair bosom and beating heart, and a love of a little nightcap on her head, she looked and listened.

And then she thought, not so much, it must be confessed, about the crisis in the affairs of her country as the crisis in the affairs of her heart. For already, since the fricassée at the Waux-Hall ball, the handsome Sergeant Lefebvre, as he became convinced that there was no other way to obtain her, had asked the fair laundress to become his wife, and she had coyly, but satisfactorily, consented.

"We have not much to begin housekeeping on," said she. "True I have my laundry—but then there are my bad debts."

"And I have my commission and my soldier's pay," said he; "but then my pay is often in arrears."

"Never mind," said she; "we are young, we love, and we have the future. And then the sorcerer the other night prophesied that I should be a duchess."

"While I—" said he, "did he not prophesy that I was to be a duke?"

"Yes," laughed Catherine; "and he said you should marry the woman you love."

"Well, let me make sure of *that*, at least, at once," urged Lefebvre.

"Oh, how impatient you men are," said Catherine. "We women cannot marry at once, we must prepare."

"*Je ne vois pas la necessité*," laughed the handsome sergeant. "But at any rate let us fix a date for our wedding."

"Well," answered Catherine, "when the tyrant falls. How will *that* suit you?"

"Admirably!" cried Lefebvre, "both as a man and a patriot. I hate tyrants—look at this."

And he showed her his arm tattooed with two swords crossed with a grenade in flames, and the legend: "Death to tyrants!"

Catherine admired the tattooing—it was really a work of art—she would have touched it, patted it and the arm.

But Lefebvre drew back, "Don't touch it—it is fresh," he cried. "It must dry—but in a few days you shall see, on this very arm, something finer than even this."

"What?" asked the laundress as curiously as tenderly.

"My wedding gift," mysteriously replied the ex-sergeant.

No more was said on the subject just then, but they drank gayly together, and then parted quickly. That is to say, Catherine having been escorted by her lover from the tavern to her bedroom, darted into the latter, and closed the door in her lover's face.

"You cannot enter here," she cried, "until you are my husband."

"And that will be when the tyrant falls," responded Lefebvre. "Death to tyrants."

But tyrants take some time to die. And it was therefore quite natural that, alike as a patriot and a woman, Catherine Sans-Gêne, laundress, had been waiting impatiently for such an uprising as was taking place this morning of the tenth of August.

The tocsin, the bell, the chimes of the clock, the drum-beats which meant the end to the king and queen of France, meant the beginning of bliss to one French washerwoman.

The *De Profundis* of royalty was her wedding march.

Two of Catherine's neighbors in their nightdresses stood beside their doors, waiting for developments and news.

"What do you know, neighbor?" asked one of them, across the street, of Mademoiselle Sans-Gêne.

"Nothing yet," she answered, "but I shall know everything soon." She was thinking of Lefebvre, who would tell her all.

And even while she thought of him, he came along, breathless with running. He was equipped and armed, but he laid down his gun to embrace his sweetheart.

"Catherine," he cried, "*ma belle blanchisseur*, how glad I am to see you. It is getting warm, but it will be warmer. Meanwhile remember the watchword for the day is, 'Long live the nation.'"

Then he told Catherine and the neighbors the situation.

An attempt had been made to assassinate M. Pétion, the mayor of Paris.

The people had seized the tyrant for a hostage—the king's palace was a fortress. The Swiss guards and the Chevaliers du Poignard were armed to the teeth, and were sworn to kill patriots. Mandat, commander of the National Guards, had betrayed the people, and had been shot by some one in the crowd.

Then, winding his arms around the blushing but willing Catherine, Lefebvre exclaimed:

"Nothing can now stop the march of the people. To-night we will win, and to-morrow we will marry. Ah! see, I have your wedding gift already."

And baring the arm he showed a second tattooing—two hearts aflame, with the legend underneath: "To Catherine—for life."

"Ah!" cried Catherine, looking at it, "it *is* finer than the other," and she clung around his neck. The prudish laundress had melted into the loving woman. "Oh, my own, my handsome Lefebvre," she murmured, "how I love thee!"

But at this moment distant shots boomed through the heavy air, and there was a roar of cannon.

"I must away, my Catherine," her lover cried, embracing her. "Duty calls; but be calm, I shall return victorious."

He seized his gun, he kissed and clasped his *girl*, then rushed away in the direction of the Tuileries.

Louis XVI. had sought refuge in the National Assembly, which had been discussing and advocating the abolition of negro slavery and the slave trade—an appropriate subject for the time. While the debate was going on, the ill-fated monarch, it is recorded, calmly munched a peach—oblivious of, or indifferent to, the tragedy around him.

It had been a great day! The night before had been a great night. The last day of tyranny—the last night of royalty. Catherine Sans-Gêne, washerwoman, had received from her betrothed husband, ex-Sergeant Lefebvre, her wedding gift, and the Marseillaise, chanting their immortal hymn, had sallied forth to destroy the last stronghold of feudalism.

CHAPTER IV.

CATHERINE AND A CHEVALIER DU POIGNARD—THE REPUBLICAN AND THE ARISTOCRAT.

THE cannon roared till noon around the Tuileries. Many were the mutations of fortune during the memorable day. M. Pétion, mayor of Paris, had been sent, under guard, to his own residence, to be kept a prisoner there till the insurrection was over. Mandat had been replaced as commander of the National Guard by Santerre. The arsenal had been forced and arms distributed. Louis XVI., accompanied by his faithful Swiss guards, left the Tuileries and demanded safety of the National Assembly. These loyal Swiss guards had expected to fight a *mob*, instead of which they found that they had to face a *people*.

Perhaps blood might have been spared that day had not, by some sad mistake, a trouble arisen between the Swiss guards, who were really well intentioned, but not so well informed, and the multitude —a trouble which became a massacre. A friend of Danton, one Westerman, an Alsatian, commanded the Marseilles and the Breton troops, and took part in the émeute. The Swiss fought bravely, but were repulsed and killed, and when the trouble terminated the palace was in the hands of the people, and the king was a prisoner.

Catherine, a little before noonday, sallied forth, hoping to meet her brave lover. She was not afraid. Was she not engaged to be married to a soldier— and a hero of the people? Besides she wanted to see if the tyrant would not yield without further delay, so that she could get married.

As for the chance of meeting her lover, fighting, and black with powder, the idea positively charmed her—made her glad—and bold. Was she not to be a soldier's wife? Even now, she felt she ought to be near him, handing him cartridges, loading his musket, herself firing a musket with him, if need be. Already she felt a warrior. She smelt powder— she sought to share the dangers of her lover—she began to feel jealous of his glory. It never occurred to her that he might fall, or that she might be struck by a bullet from the Swiss. No, she believed in the prophet of the ball. She was to *marry* Lefebvre, and play duchess to her duke. But when the real trouble, already alluded to, with the Swiss began, she was driven back by the crowd, despite her efforts, and pushed along the Rue Saint-Honoré. When she thus unwillingly reached her laundry, she was in a rage of grief as well as mortification. For she now began to fear that perhaps things might not go all one way, and that, despite the fact that he was a hero and her lover, Lefebvre might be wounded, ay, perchance at this moment—how her heart beat—dead.

She rushed into her room, and waited anxiously for such news as might come along. She heard the cannon, and she cheered the cannoneers. But still no Lefebvre came. Had he rushed in *then* she herself would have asked him to be married at once.

She closed the shutters of her workroom; she was a prudent woman, and there was no telling what might happen.

She would have started again to meet Lefebvre, only she feared that she might miss him if he was seeking her. It would be best to wait; he would return by the Rue Royal-Saint-Roche, as soon as he and his comrades had taken the palace—it was a mere matter of time.

The street was now quiet; her neighbors' houses were closed; only occasional shots were heard, and occasional fugitives seen—the last defenders of the palace, hunted down though the streets.

Suddenly she heard three shots in quick succession, and the sound of footsteps in the alleyway, leading to one of the doors of her laundry, on the Rue Saint-Honoré.

Despite of herself the laundress began to tremble. She was only a woman and alone. "There's some one in the alleyway," she said. "Who can it be?" Then, thinking of Lefebvre, and recovering her bravery, she took down the bar fastening the entrance to the alleyway, and opened the door.

She saw a wounded man, holding his hand to his breast. He wore a white uniform, knee breeches and silk stockings; his clothes were blood-stained; he could scarcely drag himself along. She saw at once that, whoever he was, he was not a "patriot"—he was "an enemy to the people"—still he certainly was a wounded man.

"Who are you? and what do you want here?" she asked firmly.

"I am a victim," the man gasped; "they seek me; give me shelter, for heaven's sake. I am an Austrian officer—I am the Count of Neipperg." He frothed at the mouth—he could say no more, and fell in the alleyway.

Catherine cried from fright and pity. Then she said: "Poor boy! they have settled thee, yes—" surveying him as he lay, his fine coat and vest stained with blood. "Thou art an aristocrat—thou hast fired on the people—thou art no Frenchman—but an Austrian—but thou art a *man*."

And then, that sweet, good, kindly instinct which is to be found in even the most energetic woman—that "sister of charity" which nestles in the breast of even a warrior-maid—took possession of the laundress, heart and soul—and, beside that wounded man, our Catherine knelt, and touching his breast, as gently as though it had been her own Lefebvre's, she endeavored to ascertain if he still lived.

"He breathes," she almost shouted with joy, at last; "he lives, and I can save him—perhaps," she added.

First she closed the alley door—as a precaution against interruption—then she went to one of the laundry troughs and filled a large bowl with fresh water, and lastly, returning to the wounded man, she made a compress of some linen lying close at hand.

In her haste she had not, till too late, noticed that she had torn up one of her customer's shirts for the compress.

"A pretty mess I've made of it," she said to herself. She looked at the mark on the shirt—"worse luck!" she cried, "it belongs to that poor artillery officer, Captain Napoleon Bonaparte—who has none too many—besides, he already owes me a big bill—let it go against the shirt I've torn. No, no, that wouldn't be fair. I'll get him a new shirt, all the same. I'll tell him I burned the old one with my iron. But he's so proud—as proud as poor—perhaps he won't take it. Ah! he is a man who will never make his laundress rich. He cares so little for clothes—about as little as he cares for women."

Here the laundress heaved a gentle sigh. If Lefebvre had but heard it! But she went on with her compress, which she neatly applied to her unexpected visitor's wounds.

The sight of this man's sufferings had transformed Catherine from an Amazon in petticoats into a ministering angel. She could almost have cursed war and warriors, as she saw his wounds, had she not thought of the French tyrant-king and his Austrian woman—Madame Veto—and of her own particular pet warrior, Lefebvre.

She looked at the wounded man with renewed attention, as she bathed him with cold water, and bandaged his wounds. "He is young—looks like a girl—but how fine his linen is!" she exclaimed, glancing at his shirt with a professional eye. "He is a beastly aristocrat." Then she softly added, "more's the pity."

Under her healing influences the wounded man, recovering his senses, opened his eyes and looked around him, as if searching for something. He saw a woman he had never seen before—a French woman.

He attempted feebly to arise. His confused fancy converted his benefactress into a dangerous enemy. "Do not kill me," he begged.

"Ah!" he continued, looking at her more calmly, "you must be the laundress, Catherine Upscher, of Saint-Amarin—to seek whom I came here."

Catherine, astonished beyond measure, merely nodded assent to her identity.

"Mademoiselle de Laveline sent me to you," said the stranger, speaking more firmly.

"What! Mademoiselle Blanche de Laveline?—did *she* send you to me?" cried Catherine. "She is the daughter of the Seigneur de Saint-Amarin—she is my protector. She it was who got me this very laundry. You know her, then?"

"Yes," answered the stranger, on whom Catherine now looked almost as a friend, "she told me in case of any trouble to seek you. She told me you were good, that you would aid me in my need. I will explain later."

"No need for any explanations," answered Catherine softly, almost tenderly. "You are *her* friend, and there's no peril I would not brave for *her*. You were right to come straight here, *mon ami!*" (She called this enemy of the people, this aristocrat, "my friend.") "You are safer here than anywhere else in Paris to-day. He who would find you here to harm you must do so over my dead body."

The wounded man became excited at her earnest words, but Catherine calmed him. "Lie still," she said, "dismiss all fear; no one will kill you." Then adopting an almost motherly tone she added: "Mademoiselle Blanche will be content to trust you to my care, although I *am* a patriot."

She uttered the last sentence proudly, but she reproved herself, in a manner, for her pride. "It is thrown away," she said to herself; "he is only an

Austrian, and an Austrian don't even know the meaning of the word patriot. There are no patriots among them—they are all subjects, all slaves." The little laundress was just then a thorough Parisian, despising the rest of the world. Then taking the wounded man's hand she pressed it lightly. "You are with a friend," she said.

The Count Neipperg fainted away from excess of joy, then, coming to, he smiled happily, and with his still cold and blood-stained hand, pressed Catherine's warmly.

Tears welled in Catherine's eyes. She was deeply affected, but she mastered her feelings. She looked at the grateful sufferer.

"If I could but carry him to bed," she thought; "he would lie more comfortably, but I am not strong enough to carry him, and he cannot help himself. Oh, if Lefebvre were only here to help me. Why does he not come! *Mon Dieu!* can it be?"

She would not even finish her terrible thought to herself. She would not even think that possibly at this very moment her lover might be lying wounded, like this man—but unlike this man, with no Catherine beside him.

But she grew cold with fright. "How terrible is war," she cried; but soon her native energy and hopefulness came to her rescue. "Bah!" she thought, "my big Lefebvre is not like this little aristocrat. He is a man, not a boy. And besides, he is a perfect receptacle for bullets. Why, I dare say he would take half a dozen into him without a whimper. He is not cut out of the same stuff as this young sprig, who has dared to defend Madame Veto, and who has fired on the people. Bad luck to him!

"No, I won't wish him any harm," thought Mademoiselle Sans-Gêne; "he couldn't help being a fool. And then he is a friend of Mademoiselle Blanche. It is impossible to leave him here and thus—he will die. But he must live. Perhaps the little fellow is betrothed to Mademoiselle Blanche." Here the laundress laughed. "It would be funny," she reflected, "if I should help her to marry when she promised to help along my marriage at any time by giving me a dowry. Well, one good turn deserves another. At any rate I must save this young man, but how on earth can I carry him into the house? Why don't Lefebvre come?"

And she looked around as if expecting him—in vain.

Suddenly she blushed, though there were none to see her, the Austrian's eyes being at that moment closed.

"Perhaps it's just as well, all round, that Lefebvre has not come—just yet. He's as jealous as a tiger, and what wouldn't he say, or do, if he saw me with this man?" so she thought. "Not that he would blame me too much for nursing a wounded aristocrat. He wouldn't like it, of course, but when he knew all, and that this Austrian was a friend of my best friend it would be all right. Besides, a French soldier has no foe after a fight. But he wouldn't like me to be playing nurse to this man, dressing his wounds—and then he might wonder how on earth this little fellow knew where I lived. Of course I could answer all his questions, but nevertheless, on the whole," she confessed to herself, "I would rather Lefebvre didn't see me *now*—so I must carry my Austrian into the house alone."

But the Austrian though little was heavy, and becoming unconscious became heavier. Catherine tried to lift him but could not.

At that moment some one knocked at the street door. Catherine, now as pale as the wounded man, found herself trembling.

"Who can it be?" she wondered. "My laundry is closed, besides, who would want washing done on such a day?"

The sound of muskets was heard on the stones. There were more knocks at the door. Voices were heard.

Some one shouted: "He is safe by this time."

Others shouted: "He is hidden here.

"Alas! they are still seeking him," thought Catherine, and she shuddered. Her eyes filled with pity as she looked upon the unconscious sufferer at her side.

There seemed to be two sets of opposing voices in the crowd outside; the shuffling of feet became noticeable. Some one cried: "Force the door."

"Oh, how shall I save him?" almost groaned Catherine. Finally, shaking the man, who now seemed to be dying, she said to him: "Come, citizen; come monsieur, courage; try to stand up—try to walk."

The Austrian opened his eyes, then closed them again. "I cannot walk," he said, in a stifled voice. "Let me die!"

Catherine felt like growling. "Oh, he wants to die now, does he? Have a little energy, sir," she said; "*cièl!* remember, monsieur, your friend, Mademoiselle de Laveline, never sent you to me to die—you must live—I must keep you alive for her, at any rate. So get up—so—ah!—that's the way—up—up—you see it is not so very hard after all, only a little will-power, you see?"

No, he did *not* see, nor did Catherine see either.

The Austrian staggered like a drunken man. It took more than the laundress' strength to support him. Meanwhile the noise without increased. The cries, the threats, the oaths redoubled, then the crowd beat at the door with their bayonets, and made the building shake.

Suddenly a well-known voice brought the blood into Catherine's veins, the blush of love into her cheeks. She heard Lefebvre cry to the crowd: "That door, citizens, shall be opened for you, but by me—let me pass. Catherine, it is I—have no fear; come, open the door," he called to her in his manliest, tenderest, but firmest tones.

"I am coming, Lefebvre," answered Catherine, yet she came not.

"I can hear her," said Lefebvre outside to the crowd around the door; "a little patience, and she will open to you. You frightened her by your obstreperous demands—give her time."

Meanwhile, inside the house, in the entry from the alley, the laundress was entreating the Austrian nobleman to further exertion.

"Did you not hear them?" she said. "They are coming in here; I must open to them, and you must get up those stairs. I will hide you in the garret."

While the wounded man only moaned, and asked: "How high is it?" and said, "I cannot climb, I cannot see—I shall fall."

"Well, what must be, must," said Catherine desperately. "Fall there, in my bedroom, then," opening her chamber door, helping the Austrian to enter it, and then locking the door upon him.

She blushed as she did so. It was the first time a man had ever entered her bedchamber, and now she had locked a strange man in it.

Then breathless and happy, as well as confused and anxious, she rushed to the door and gave entrance and welcome to Lefebvre, thinking gleefully to herself that the other man was safe.

CHAPTER V.

THE MAN INSIDE THE BEDROOM AND THE MAN OUTSIDE.

WHEN the bar was removed, the bolt drawn, and the door opened, Lefebvre entered, along with several members of the National Guard, and a crowd of women and children, neighbors and idlers.

"Why were you so slow in opening to us, my sweet Catherine?" asked Lefebvre, as he kissed her rapturously, on both her cheeks.

"My! such noise! such yells!"

"Yes, I know, you were frightened; but they were friends and patriots who knocked. We are victors, Catherine, victorious everywhere. The nation's tyrant is now the nation's prisoner. The fortress of despotism has been conquered by the free, and to-day the people are the masters."

"Long live the nation!" cried some. Others shouted: "Death to traitors!" "To perdition with the Swiss!" "Destruction to the Chevaliers du Poignard!" while a Chevalier du Poignard lay within a few feet of them, in Catherine's bedchamber.

"Yes, death to those who have fired on the people!" shouted Lefebvre. Then to Catherine and more gently: "Do you know why we came so rudely to your rooms?"

"No," she replied, "but I was afraid; I have heard shooting near here."

"Yes," said he, "we were firing just now at an aristocrat who has escaped from the Tuileries, a Chevalier du Poignard who assassinates patriots. I swore that if he fell into my hands his blood should atone for ours; but as we fired and pursued him he vanished—here at the turn of the street. But he must be wounded, and as there was blood beside your alley door we thought he might have found a hiding here; but he is not here, else we could see him. Besides you can make it certain, can you not?"

He looked around him, then at Catherine—then he turned to the National Guards.

"Comrades, we—at least you—have nothing more to do here now, for the white uniform is nowhere to be seen. With your leave, you will permit me, as one of the victors of the Tuileries, to embrace my wife in private."

"Oh, not *yet* your *wife*, Lefebvre," protested Catherine, smiling.

"How so—why not?" insisted Lefebvre; "is not the tyrant already done for?" and he waved his hand to the guards.

"Comrades," he said, "later on, at the section, we must appoint a captain, two lieutenants, and a curate. Our last curate ran away, and the other officers were killed by the Swiss, but we can find others. But now, *au revoir!*"

The guards departed, yet the crowds still surrounded the door. Lefebvre, though somewhat impatient to be alone with Catherine, spoke to them softly and pleasantly: "What are you waiting for?" he said. "For the man in white? you see he is *not* here with *her;* so much is clear. He must have fallen by the way—some distance perhaps from here—he had at least three bullets in his breast; look for him, do for him—that is your affair. No true hunter gives up his game. Once more, *au revoir!*"

And the ex-sergeant fairly drove the crowd away.

They went off muttering. "Well, we'll go after him," said one.

"It is not so easy a thing after all to turn the world upside down," said another, thinking of the events of the day. "But," before going away he added in a whisper to Lefebvre, glancing at Catherine's bedroom door, "couldn't somebody be concealed *there?*"

Lefebvre comprehended the fellow's meaning, and was at first inclined to resent his insinuation, but he quickly closed the street door on him with the others.

At last the lovers were alone. With open arms Lefebvre clasped his Catherine to his breast. "I thought they'd never go," he said; "but did you hear his impudence—concealed in *your* bedroom, indeed—your bedroom—what an idea! But how you tremble, Catherine! Come, be calm—it's all over; let us think only of each other."

But Catherine was thinking just then of the other man. And involuntarily her eyes turned toward the room where that other was concealed. Lefebvre noticed the direction of Catherine's eyes. Instinctively he went toward the bedroom to enter it, but he could not. The door was locked. Lefebvre paused, astonished, uneasy, almost alarmed. A vague suspicion crossed his mind. Could, after all, a man be concealed there?

"Why is that door closed?" asked Lefebvre.

"Because I wanted it to be," answered Catherine.

"That is no reason for you—for me," he said; "give me the key."

"You shall not have it," she said distinctly, yet with evident embarrassment.

Lefebvre turned white with rage. "Catherine," he cried, "you are deceiving me, there is some one—some *man*—in your room—your bedroom. I must have that key."

"And I have already said," she spoke calmly and clearly now, "you shall not have it."

"Well, then," he shouted, almost beside himself with anger, "I shall take it."

As he spoke he forced his hand into the laundress' apron pocket, took the key out of it, opened the door of the bedroom with it, and glanced within.

"Lefebvre," cried Catherine, speaking as quietly yet as solemnly as a judge pronouncing sentence, "I have already told you that no man until after he is my husband shall go through that door. Enter through it now by force, and you will never enter it again with *me*."

At this critical moment some one knocked at the outer door. Catherine opened it.

Several men stood waiting. "Where is Sergeant Lefebvre?" one of them asked of Catherine. "He is wanted at the section. They talk of making him lieutenant."

Speechless and pale, Lefebvre stepped back from Catherine's bedroom door, but he had already seen a sick man in it lying apparently lifeless on the bed.

He now relocked the door of Catherine's bedchamber, and returned the key to Catherine, simply saying:

"Why did you not tell me that a wounded man was there?"

"Ah! you know all now," exclaimed the girl, greatly relieved. Then she added sorrowfully: "Poor lad—will he die?"

"No, I think he will live," said Lefebvre, now calm. "He did *not* come as a lover—assure me of that, at least," he added, his jealousy for a moment asserting itself.

"You, you *brute!*" cried Catherine, half indignantly, half playfully, "had he been my lover think you I would have hidden him in my bedroom and let you in? But promise me," she asked pleadingly, "you will not give him up. Remember, though he is an Austrian, he is also the friend of my friend, Mlle. Blanche de Laveline—my dearest friend, my benefactress."

"Oh, a wounded man is sacred," answered Lefebvre; "your bedroom now, my Catherine, is an ambulance—none dare disturb it. Nurse the poor devil! Save him! I am ready to help you pay your debt to that lady who has been your friend. But keep the matter secret; gratify your kindly heart, but hold your woman's tongue, that none may ever even guess. It would ruin me, in my section."

"Spoken like a man, true and brave," cried Catherine, embracing Lefebvre. "You have my promise. When you are ready I am your wife."

"Well said and quickly done, my Catherine," said her lover. "But hear! the men outside are calling for me—they grow impatient. I must go with my friends."

One more embrace and he was gone.

And while Sergeant Lefebvre went to the election at the section, Catherine Sans-Gêne, laundress, tended the young Austrian who was now her sacred charge, for the sake of her benefactress, Blanche de Laveline.

CHAPTER VI.

LITTLE HENRIOT, OR MAN'S LOVE AND WOMAN'S GRATITUDE.

Catherine brought bouillon and wine to the sick man, and, as he awakened at the sound of her step, she gave them to him, saying: "Take, and grow stronger. You will need strength, for you must know that you cannot stay here much longer. Of course, I do not send you away, for you are here as the guest of my benefactress, Mademoiselle Blanche. But then there are so many outsiders who come to my laundry—my fellow-workers, my customers, and the rest, that there would be talk and trouble. And then remember, man, you have fired on the people."

Neipperg moved uneasily, then said slowly: "We defended the king."

"The king!" cried patriotic Catherine, shrugging her plump shoulders; "you mean 'the big Veto!' He took refuge with the Assembly—*he* was all safe and quiet—but he let *you* fight it out. He is a good-for-nothing idler, this big Veto of yours—and his jade of a wife leads him by the nose—and do you know where she is leading him?—before the guns of the people. But," she asked, after a pause, "you are a stranger, what were you fighting for, here in Paris—you an Austrian?"

"I was charged, as lieutenant of the noble guards of his majesty, with a mission to the queen," was his reply.

"Oh, the Austrian woman," sneered Catherine; "so it was for her you fought—you who have nothing on earth to do with our troubles!"

"I wanted to die," exclaimed the young man. He spoke simply, and like a man who meant what he said.

"To die!" cried Catherine, "at your age—for a king—or a queen—or anybody. There's some mystery about all this, young man," she continued, smiling. "Excuse me, monsieur, if I seem too emphatic, but when one is twenty years old, or so, and wants to die, fighting, among men he doesn't know—and against whom he has no reason to fight—why then one must be in love. Come now, have I guessed aright?"

"You have, my good hostess."

"Good gracious!" said Catherine, "it was not hard to guess. Well, then, shall I tell you with whom you are in love? Why, with Mademoiselle Blanche de Laveline, to be sure." The wounded man seemed to wince. "Oh, I do not ask your confidence," continued Catherine quickly; "it is none of my business, but I know that Mademoiselle de Laveline is worthy of your love—or any man's."

At these words the Count de Neipperg raised himself slightly and exclaimed fervently: "Yes, she is good—my darling Blanche—as good as she is beautiful. Oh, madame," he continued, seizing Catherine's hand, "if I die, tell her that with my last sigh I breathed her name; tell her, will you not, that my last thought was for her—and for——"

He paused abruptly; some secret was rising to his lips, but it remained unrevealed.

"Oh, you will not die just yet," said Catherine, all anxiety to comfort him. "Who dies at your time of life when he is in love? You must live, my man—live for the woman you love—and for—for that other person you were going to name—her father, was it not—Marquis de Laveline? He's a very fine old gentleman, if he *is* an aristocrat. I have seen him several times, in Alsace. He wore a blue velvet coat all embroidered with gold, and he carried such a snuff-box—with jewels that sparkled like stars!"

But Neipperg frowned, and smiled contemptuously when he heard the name of the Marquis de Laveline. Evidently Catherine had not guessed aright, so far as the marquis and this stranger were concerned. "It seems," thought Catherine, "that those two are not friends. Well, it may be well to know this; I shall not mention the marquis again. Perhaps the old gentleman, Blanche's father, is opposed to the match. Poor girl! poor fellow! that was why he wanted to die."

And, with a sigh of pity, sincere pity, felt by a love-happy woman for the love unhappy, she arranged the "poor fellow's" pillow, and, blaming herself for having talked to him too much, begged him to go to sleep.

"No, no," said the sick man, earnestly but gently, "talk to me more—talk to me of Blanche—tell me all you know about her—*that* will cure me."

Catherine smiled at his words, and then sitting down told him how she had been born on a farm near the castle of the Seigneur de Laveline, where she had seen Mademoiselle de Laveline grow up, and learned to love her. Blanche had been reared in the country, became a splendid horsewoman, mingled freely with the country people, was never proud, and had become attached to Catherine. Finally Catherine had been taken into the household service of the Laveline ladies, and when Blanche's mother died, and Blanche and her father went to England, the marquis having received a diplomatic appointment, before going to London Mademoiselle Blanche had set up Catherine in the laundry business in Paris. "Oh, she is indeed a creature who deserves to be beloved and blessed," said the grateful Catherine.

Then some one knocked at the door. Could it be Lefebvre, with his comrades? how inopportune! The wounded man pricked his ears. Catherine became uneasy, but she kept cool. "Rest quietly, and make no noise," she said. "If Lefebvre is alone there is no danger, but if his comrades are with him I will send them all away. Do as I bid you, but do not be afraid."

Then she resolutely opened the door—no Lefebvre was there—no man was there—only one young woman—veiled. Catherine was astonished, but her surprise increased when the young woman staggered into the room, crying out: "He is here, is he not? They said they saw a man drag himself in here. Is he still alive?" Catherine recognized the tones of her voice, and when the stranger lifted her veil she saw Mademoiselle Blanche de Laveline. The laundress understood all.

"Yes, he is here—in my room," she said; "he lives—and he loves you—he lives for and loves you only—speaks of you only—come and see him."

"Oh, my good Catherine," cried Blanche de Laveline, as she embraced the laundress, "what a happy inspiration it was for me to send him here! Take me to him."

The sight of Blanche startled the wounded man into energetic life. He leaped from his bed, but the the two women forced him into it again, by gentle force. He showered kisses on his lady love—he was transported. Catherine smiled and would have left them to themselves, but Blanche de Laveline insisted that she should remain. The lovers had no secrets now from her, beside they needed her, as will be seen.

The Marquis de Laveline had frowned upon the suit of the Count de Neipperg for his daughter's hand. He had destined her, for his own aggrandizement, to become the wife of a Belgian millionaire, a Baron de Lowendaal—a heavy creditor—who demanded either his daughter or his dues. Loving the young count, but submissive to her father, like most French girls, Mademoiselle Blanche had promised to become the wife of the baron, even while yielding herself to the count. The day of the marriage to the baron had been fixed—yet the nobly-born mademoiselle had given her lover the address of her former servant, and protegé, the laundress in Paris, that he might meet her there by stealth, after marriage.

Distracted at his prospects the count had taken military service at the Tuileries while the woman he loved ostensibly prepared for her marriage to another man. But the chapter of accidents had favored the count. The baron had left Paris, frightened at the coming revolution, and the marriage had been postponed. It was, according to present arrangements, to take place at the baron's country seat, near Jemmapes, on the Belgian frontier—whither the young girl had promised shortly to accompany her father. But meanwhile she had secretly sent a letter to her would-be husband telling of her love for another man—and, come whatever would, she now vowed never to be the baron's bride. She might promise to wed him all the time, but she would wed him never—she swore it.

"Oh, my darling Blanche," cried the count, when he heard her solemn protestation; "my beloved *wife*—whom I adore. You give me back my life—now!" he almost shouted, "I can fight the *canaille*—I can kill those *sans-culottes.*"

In his wild excitement he made a sudden movement. The compress which the laundress had made of her delinquent customer, Napoleon Bonaparte's shirt, slipped from the wound. The gash re-opened—and a stream of blood flowed over the bed.

He uttered a cry, and Catherine and Mademoiselle Blanche, with difficulty closed the wound again.

But the count had fainted.

He recovered consciousness slowly. He imagined he was dying, and in his death agonies, as he thought, revealed to Catherine's ears a secret—the secret of secrets. "Blanche," he cried, gasping, "watch over our—our child."

At the words "our child" Catherine staggered—as though she had received a blow—but she controlled herself, and, looking lovingly at the now downcast Blanche, said: "Fear nothing, mademoiselle, what I have happened to hear has gone into one ear and has come out by the other. You know that if you need me I am always at your service. But the—the child—is he big—I know that he—for it surely is a boy—is sweet."

"He is nearly three years old," answered the blushing, beautiful mother.

"And what is his name?" asked the interested Catherine.

"Henri," said Blanche, "but we call him Henriot."

"What a pretty name," cried Catherine. "Oh, can I not see him, mademoiselle?"

The mother paused a moment, in deep thought, then taking the faithful laundress' hand, she said: "Listen, dear, you can do me a great service and finish what you have already so well begun in saving Monsieur de Neipperg."

"Speak, mademoiselle," cried Catherine excitedly; "what is it I am to do?"

"My boy," said Blanche, "is now with a good woman in the suburbs of Versailles, her name is Hoche—Mère Hoche."

"I know her," interrupted Catherine; "her son is a great friend of my—my lover—my husband that is to be—my Lefebvre. "You see," she continued, blushing divinely, "I too shall marry soon and have, perhaps, a little Henri—who knows—more than one perhaps."

"I wish you joy," said Mademoiselle de Laveline, embracing her. "But will you go for me and see Mother Hoche?"

"What shall I say to Citizeness Hoche?" asked Catherine.

"Give her first this letter," said Blanche, "then this money—and then take the child—yourself. Do I ask too much?"

"Is that *all?*" asked the grateful laundress. "Why if you were to tell me to take the Tuileries, though the Swiss guards were still in it, I would try to take it." She continued smiling, "too much—the bare idea is cruel—why if it was not for your kindness in having started me here in this laundry I should never have been what I shall become—Madame Lefebvre. Too much indeed—have you not something else for me to do? But when I have taken the child what am I to do with the little darling—whom I love already."

"Bring him to me," said his mother.

"Where?"

"To Jemmapes—a village near the Belgian border—to the Palace de Lowendaal, near the village. Can you get there?"

"I can get anywhere—for *you*. But when am I to be there with the boy?"

"When? Let me see. By the sixth of November at the very latest."

"I will be there," said Catherine; "and perhaps Lefebvre will be with me. The fighting may be over then, and at any rate I am sure Lefebvre will manage that I go."

"Embrace me, Catherine," cried Blanche de Laveline. "Some day I may be able to reward you."

"You have rewarded me in advance," said Catherine; "rely on me."

Then both women glanced at the young count, who had fallen asleep from sheer excitement and exhaustion.

"I shall watch beside him," said Blanche; "but meanwhile, Catherine, attend to your business, with which I must already have interfered sadly."

"I would have not had any business to attend to," remarked the laundress, "had it not been for you; but make yourself entirely at home—this place is yours. But, oh, see, he opens his eyes—he sees you—he smiles—he will be stronger now. You two must have a world of things to tell each other. I shall leave you, but not for long; I must take some clothes to a customer who lives a little way from here" (thinking of Napoleon Bonaparte and his shirts); "I will return at once—open the door to nobody. Good-by—*au revoir*."

CHAPTER VII.

THE TENANT OF THE HOTEL DE METZ.

While the Count de Neipperg and Blanche de Laveline discussed in delicious *tête-à-tête* their future, and their child, the laundress had taken a basketful of linen and was preparing to go out.

First, last, and all the time, Catherine Upscher, Mademoiselle Sans-Gêne, was a business woman, and wanted to employ her time, pleasantly if she could, but always profitably.

Her benefactress was happy with her lover, she would not be missed, and besides she had lost the whole morning—the best part of the day. True the Tuileries had been taken—and it wasn't taken often—still it didn't pay her anything—so she must make up for lost time.

As she prepared for the street she thought upon various things. She who had never had a secret of her own, had now become, in spite of herself, the keeper of the secrets of other people.

She was still amazed, in her own mind, that her benefactress, the nobly-born Blanche de Laveline, should have so far forgotten herself as to yield to a lover—when she herself, Catherine Upscher, lowly born and bred, had up to date resisted all importunities. But love laughs at all barriers of mere position or education. A marquis' daughter is quite as liable to be fooled as a laundress, and after all Blanche had been her benefactress, and it was not for such as her to criticise. Rather let her look forward to the time when Blanche would be publicly united to the count, and their child acknowledged before the world.

Neipperg had approved warmly of Blanche's idea of entrusting the boy to Catherine, and of the latter taking the child to Jemmapes, and it had been arranged that as soon as he was well enough the count would seek the mother of his child, even if he had to beard the lion in his den, the Baron de Lowendaal in his own palace halls—ay, even if he were compelled to dispute his right to Blanche at the point of the sword.

This was as it should be. As for her own Lefebvre, he was doing his part in the world—that is, Paris.

"Doubtless," thought Catherine, "he is at this moment at his section, where they are voting—many of them for him. I wish I were there to vote for him myself—but there will be enough without me. No man has more friends, nor deserves them more, than my Lefebvre. He cannot leave his section for several hours yet," she calculated; "he cannot leave before the election of new officers, including *his* election, is announced. That will take, let me see, say two hours; they always take such a long time to vote at the section of the Filles-Saint-Thomas. They drink more quickly than they vote. Well, all good angels guard my man; and now I shall have time to run, or for that matter to walk, to Captain Bonaparte's."

And as she thought of the captain she thought of his shirt—the shirt she had used as a compress for the wounds of the young Austrian. "I fear me, he will miss that shirt; he has no surplus in the way of linen. Poor Captain Bonaparte!"

She uttered the last three words with something like a sigh.

She really seemed to have a pity for "poor Captain Bonaparte," and has not the poet told us truly that "Pity is akin to love."

"When I am Citizeness Lefebvre," she blushed even to herself, "I don't want to owe anything—not even the price of a shirt—to Captain Bonaparte." So ran her thoughts. "It is enough that he owes *me*—I'll have his bill ready—in case he should ask me for it. I may even present it myself and demand payment if I can muster up sufficient courage. Here, Mademoiselle Sans-Gêne, what's the matter with you?" she took herself to task roundly; "you are considered to be full of dash and energy, and to be not afraid of anybody, and yet you have never yet been able, though you have tried several times, to present this Captain Napoleon Bonaparte with his wash bill. But then," so she excused herself to herself, "I never expect to get what he owes me. He is an honest young man and would pay me if he could, but he can't, he hasn't got the money, that is all there is about it; and yet, I really can't help admiring him—he is such a worker, such a scholar—he is always reading, or writing, or studying, or planning, and then he has no fun in his life; he takes his pleasures sadly, as if he was an Englishman. Well, one cannot be good and wise and rich, too; one cannot have everything." And she felt in her pocket for Captain Bonaparte's wash bill.

Finally she arrived at the Hotel de Metz, a modest building kept by one Citizen Maureard.

It was in this hotel that this Captain Bonaparte resided during this period of his existence.

Yes, "existence" is the right word in this connection—existence, not life—he could not be said truthfully to be "living" at this time—only existing—not living at the Hotel de Metz, only residing there, a mere tenant of the hotel, and a tenant in arrears.

He occupied a room, a small room, a very small and cheerless apartment on the third story, number 14.

He subsisted on next to nothing, cooked his own meals, when he had any to cook, and often made a meal of milk.

And yet in spite of his economy he ran into debt, notwithstanding his own resolves. Necessity knows no law and heeds no protestations. He owed fifteen francs to his hotel-keeper, who often demanded them, and, as we have already ascertained from his laundress, owed his wash bill.

And all his friends, just then, were as poor as himself—some of them even poorer—actually penniless—and Paris is a bad place to be poor in. His closest intimates were Junot, Marmont, and Bourrienne, and on one occasion, counting up, there were only four sous among the four.

True, all four were rich in hopes, but landlords and laundresses do not take their pay in hopes.

Yes, strange as it may seem, the future conqueror of Europe was now almost a pauper in Paris.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LITTLE DAYS OF A GREAT MAN—NAPOLEON WHEN HE WAS YOUNG AND POOR.

The youth of Napoleon Bonaparte, one of the greatest and the most unfortunate of men, one of the important personages of history—who made his country ring with his name and his glory, and whose aureole of blood still stains the horizon, passed without any extraordinary events whatever, and could not point to one supernatural indication.

After he had become famous his biographers invented such events and such indications in abundance, but there were really none *before.*

Bonaparte as a boy and as a young man, may be said to have deceived the world. There was no one to foretell his fortune—there was no sign of coming greatness.

In his early years he was merely a poor, reserved, industrious student, very proud and very quiet. He was in fact decidedly unfortunate; he was isolated from the world by lack of money. Like all Corsicans he was clannish—like all Corsicans he felt the pressure of family ties, and so he endured not only the pangs of his own poverty, but those of the poverty of his family.

He came of good stock, however; both his father and his mother were superior to the average man and woman.

His father, Charles Bonaparte, or speaking more accurately, Charles *de* Bonaparte, was the descendant of an ancient and honorable family of the Tuscan nobility, established at Ajaccio for over two centuries. He became a lawyer, like his father and grandfather before him. Charles Bonaparte was both ambitious and patriotic. He desired the independence of Corsica, and was one of the most zealous adherents of the patriot Paoli; but when Paoli failed and left Corsica, Charles Bonaparte prudently submitted to French rule. He became in time a member of the Corsican council of administration, and was universally respected, but his pecuniary means were limited. There were few opportunities for Corsicans to make money in Corsica; he owned what was grandiloquently styled "a plantation of vines and olives," but it only yielded its owner a thousand livres yearly—scarcely that—and even this income grew less and less and threatened to disappear altogether.

Perhaps the wisest thing Charles Bonaparte ever did was to marry Letitia Ramolini. She was a beauty, the belle of Corsica, with a profile clean cut, like an antique cameo, a woman of a commanding presence, and a commanding mind.

Most great men owe most to their mothers, and Napoleon Bonaparte was no exception to this rule.

Among her other gifts, the wife of Charles Bonaparte knew the value of money; she kept the Bonapartes from absolutely starving in Corsica, and, later on, when her son was Emperor of France, and all her children and relatives were kings, queens, princes and princesses, she still saved all the money she could, and spent as little as possible.

Napoleon reproved her gently for this "misplaced economy" as he conceived it to be one day, and found fault with her for not spending half of her liberal allowance, but she simply said to him: "You may yourself want money some day, and then I will have some for you. I am economizing for my children." And the time came when her children needed all the money they could get, and could not get any.

Accepted tradition has it that Napoleon Bonaparte was born August 15, 1769, and was the second son of his parents, but another calculation figures that Joseph Bonaparte was the younger son, and that Napoleon was born January 7, 1768.

It is odd that the exact date of the birth of the most famous man of modern times should thus be in doubt; but so it is, and the very marriage certificate of Napoleon and Josephine adds to this confusion of dates.

Two sets of circumstances largely influenced the formation of Napoleon's character, and decided his bent of thought. These were the political perturbations of his native land, and the pecuniary distress of his family.

There was civil war raging in his country, there was poverty raging in his home. Together they hardened his soul, they embittered his youth.

He was naturally serious, and seriously he went to school at Brienne, but he came out of school sad, heart-sore.

He was not "popular" as a schoolboy; his comrades made fun at his odd name, and laughed at his trying to talk French with an Italian accent, and above all they taunted him with his poverty. He had no "spending money," and every boy knows *what that* means to a boy.

He was not a particularly bright scholar either; fair, especially in mathematics, but not brilliant. He only came out of his shell once; he led a small army of boys one winter to attack a snow fort with snowballs, and by strategy he took the fort; but he went back to his solitude again, and boys who love solitude are not loved themselves. Youth is, as it ought to be, social.

His only companion at Brienne was a lad called Bourrienne, who afterward associated with him in Paris and became his private secretary. This Bourrienne was a miser and an ingrate. Napoleon loaded him with favors which he repaid by abuse in his biography of his master.

Napoleon went from Brienne to the military school where he duplicated his career at Brienne, with additional misery and privation.

He was always in want of ready money; what little he had he sent to his family, who were ever dear to him; but he was young and loved pleasure, as all boys should; but pleasures, even boyish joys, cost money—not much it is true—but money is what the young Napoleon never had.

Thus isolated from his kind at an age when the heart is ready to expand, the lonely youth grew up to be the inscrutable and pitiless man—a man of bronze.

In 1785 his father died at the age of thirty-nine years, just as Napoleon was appointed second lieutenant in the company of bombardiers of the regiment of La Fère in garrison at Valencia. While in this position he wrote in his spare hours a history of

Corsica, a work of some merit, and he also made an attempt to enter society. He even perpetrated the extravagance of taking dancing lessons of a Professor Dantel. He was as earnest in his study of the terpsichorean art as in his study of mathematics, but his assiduity was not as well rewarded in the former as in the latter. To tell the truth, the great Corsican was never graceful—the cleverest soldier who ever lived was clumsy.

At this time Napoleon likewise formed the acquaintanceship of quasi-fashionable ladies, and began his career of gallantry; but in this, as in every other pursuit of his youth, he was hampered by his poverty, and finally retired, alike defeated and disgusted.

His regiment was sent first to Lyons, then to Douai, but Napoleon obtained a leave of absence, which he passed partly with his mother and sisters at Ajaccio, and partly in Paris, where he lived at the Hotel de Cherbourg, in the Rue de Four-Saint-Honoré.

During his stay in Paris he took with him his young brother Louis; he did so from affection and from necessity. His mother, a widow with eight children, could not support them all, so Napoleon took one of the eight with him.

By this time his money fell short—shorter than usual—and so the future emperor and his brother existed, counting room rent, on ninety-two francs, fifteen centimes a month—less than half of a clerk's salary.

The pair resided in two small rooms, without any furniture to speak of, and without any fire at all. The future master of the Tuileries and Saint Cloud, slept on a cot, and a very old and hard one; sat and thought out the problems of life on a straw-stuffed chair, and wrote and ate on a table of hard white board. For library he kept his old trunk, stuffed with

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manuscripts and books, in the middle of the room; as for Louis, the future King of Holland, he slept awhile on the floor, then on a mattress, but no bed. As for servant they kept only one, and his name was Napoleon Bonaparte. The future master of Europe brushed the coats, polished the boots, dusted the room and cooked the dinner.

And he did all this within a few thousand feet of the palace which in a few years was to be his imperial home.

History has given to the astonished world many dramatic contrasts, but none so startling as this. Napoleon himself in his prosperity never entirely forgot this period of adversity. Once one of his functionaries complained to his imperial lord that his pay was inadequate—that it was but gilded poverty.

"Ah, monsieur," said the emperor, "I, too, have known poverty, and in this very Paris; but there was no 'gilt' about it. The veneer was off—it was the solid article. Many a morning I breakfasted on dry bread, but I did my duty and never complained. I closed my door on my poverty. I kept it to myself. I never talked of it or showed my sores."

One thing is certain: Napoleon's poverty preserved alike his health and his morals at this critical period of his life. It kept him strong and pure.

It is characteristic of the man that, as his lack of money prevented him at this time from gallantry, he acted like the fox with the sour grapes, and railed against women. He wrote to a friend: "I believe that what is called love is the bane of the world, and the destruction of all personal happiness in man. Love does more harm than good." He altered his sentiments on this point with his circumstances.

At last, raised to a first lieutenancy of the Fourth Artillery, Bonaparte, and his brother Louis, returned to Valencia. At this stage he abandoned all social aspirations for the while, and became once more the quiet, studious cynic and officer, merging gradually into the philosophical agitator and revolutionist.

About this period Napoleon Bonaparte, the future autocrat of the continent, was almost as fiery in his denunciations of authority as ever were Danton, Marat, or Robespierre. He was always exclaiming for "liberty," always haranguing about "the rights of the people." In short he became known as a "revolutionist," an embryo anarchist. He became the secretary of the democratic club "Les Amis de Peuple," and perhaps while the fever lasted, he was sincere. Why not? he was a many-sided man, a chameleon, a superb actor, who understood "make up" to perfection.

He could adapt himself to any scene, person, circumstance, or theory; could advocate any side, or all sides, side by side, with equal facility and truthfulness; he could wear a mask as though it were a face. There was Italian finesse as well as fervor in the great Corsican. And yet, at this peculiar period of his wonderful and meteoric career, he did not hesitate, this advocate of the people, to resort to bold defiance and brute force to gain his purposes, spite of popular sentiment, as was shown by an episode of his life in Corsica.

In October, 1791, he obtained leave of absence to improve his health and to visit his mother and sisters. He accordingly sailed to his native island, where he determined to become the commander of a battalion of National Guards at Ajaccio. He took his family into his confidence, and made all his relatives his partisans, but he had a rival for this coveted place—a man named Marius Peraldi, who belonged to one of the most illustrious families in Corsica—and who was, to a greater degree than Bonaparte, the popular candidate for the position.

Bonaparte, however, was the more energetic of the two, and worked day and night. He stirred Ajaccio as the town had never been stirred before. Ere long he stood even in the race with his rival, but there was now a third element introduced into the canvass which could turn the scale. This was composed of the commissaries of the constituante, sent direct to Corsica by the central power. They occupied a species of semi-official position, and that means a great deal in Corsica, and they controlled enough votes to make the candidate they favored win.

Bonaparte appreciated these facts and did all he could to gain the commissaries, but in vain. He had no ready money, and the commissaries were venal. Meanwhile the other side had "seen" them and made "satisfactory arrangements." Their chief, a man named Muratori, had "settled" with Marius Peraldi.

Ascertaining this, Bonaparte's friends and partisans, even his own family, thought his cause lost, but not so Bonaparte. He was as ardent and tenacious then as afterward. The youth is the father of the full-grown man.

He called together a number of his warmest and boldest partisans, men who like himself stopped at nothing, and laid before them a daring plan of action, which met with their instant approval.

This plan was carried out to the most minute detail.

One night while Marius Peraldi was entertaining Muratori and the commissaries at dinner, the dining-room was invaded by a force of armed men who pointed their guns alike at host and guests, while two of the invaders, doubly armed, seized Muratori, and led him to the Bonaparte mansion.

He was a thoroughly frightened man, but no harm was done him. He was hospitably received by Napoleon himself, who entertained him on the best his house afforded; his sisters and his mother likewise welcomed him and lavished courtesies upon him.

"Make yourself entirely at home," said Napoleon to his involuntary guest. "I know that Peraldi forced you to his dinner, but there is no compulsion." He said this, although several of his armed partisans were still standing at his dining-room door, ready to shoot his guest if he moved hand or foot.

Muratori saw that he was done for, so far as the matter at issue was concerned, and man-like, he proceeded to make the best of the situation. He pretended to humor the Bonaparte assumption that he was their invited guest, and he ate and drank as heartily at Bonaparte's as a few hours before he had feasted at Peraldi's. Needless to say that on the morrow Napoleon was elected commander of the National Guards of Ajaccio.

Thus Ajaccio foreshadowed St. Cloud and the election for commander of the National Guard foretold the man of Brumaire.

And it must be remembered that in this affair Bonaparte took a double risk, not only of losing his desired place as commander of the militia in Corsica, but of forfeiting his rank in the regular army of France. For according to the rule of military service no officer connected with an army in active operation in the field has any right to any territorial or outside position, but this was a revolutionary period, and Napoleon took his chances. Had matters been in a settled state his exploit would have cost him dear; but he contrived to have his furlough prolonged, so that ere it ended his term of service had expired.

But perhaps the one point connected with this episode which was most characteristic of the man was the motive which inspired it. The affair had not been undertaken for mere power—there was no sphere for power to exert itself in Corsica. It had not been conceived or executed in a spirit of ambition—there was no scope for ambition in Corsica. It was not a political affair—Bonaparte really cared nothing for the politics of Corsica. No, the real motive which animated the future "man of destiny" in this matter was money—the desire for money—but not money for himself, but for his family, for his mother, his brothers and his sisters. Napoleon made an increase in his pay of eighty-one livres by forcing himself into the position of commander of the National Guards at Ajaccio; with this increase he was enabled to replenish the scanty wardrobe of his sisters and to educate his brothers; this was the secret of his émeute in Corsica. All his life, in one way or another, Napoleon Bonaparte, whether poor or rich, obscure or omnipotent, was more or less, generally more, the victim of his family.

Whatever were his faults, lack of natural affection was not one of them. He was the best of sons, always loving, respecting, and taking care of his mother, who was in all respects worthy of his devotion. He was the best of brothers to his sisters, never forgetting their wishes—ever alert to gratify their ambitions, besides being fond of them personally. As for his brothers, he was a father and a guardian to them all. True, in his after career he used his brothers and sisters as the tools of his purposes, but his purposes always included their own benefit and advancement; and it must be said that none of his family, except his mother, reciprocated in full his attachment, or appreciated his motives.

He gained his end, as has been shown, in this Corsican episode, and got his money, but he did not have his own way in the matter altogether; he had to suffer a certain penalty for his elevation and success. The affair was brought by his enemies to the notice of the French authorities, who investigated it thoroughly. Napoleon, like the shrewd lawyer he was (as was shown afterward in the code Napoleon), pleaded his own cause cunningly. In obtaining command of the battalion at Ajaccio he was accused of practically leaving or deserting the army. This he strenuously denied, for he argued that the National Guard in Corsica was really a part of the regular French army, and was, according to the rules of war, in active service. Consequently, as he had obtained a position in the National Guards he had never left the army; besides, argued Bonaparte, he had complied with the decree of the Assembly of December 17, 1791, which authorized officers of the active army to serve in the ranks of the National Guard. He claimed to have consulted the camp-marshal of Rossi on this point, who had convinced himself satisfactorily of the entire regularity of the whole proceeding.

But despite this special pleading Napoleon was deposed by Colonel Maillard; whereupon he went to Paris to justify his conduct to the minister of war.

He felt hopeful of so doing, and used every direct and indirect influence to impress himself upon the war minister. He lost not a minute's time in Paris, and when not engaged in advancing his cause with the authorities he was working and planning for the future, although not always able to pay for his washing, as his laundress, Mademoiselle Catherine Sans-Gêne, had already by experience ascertained.

The future emperor of the French at this period of his life could claim only one family of any social position as his "friends," and this family hailed from Corsica—the Permons, consisting of monsieur, madame and mademoiselle, their daughter, whom he had known in Valencia. He took dinner once a week at the Permons', and generally it was the only real *bona fide* dinner he partook of during the week. He repaid his social obligations to these Permons in later years. Mademoiselle Permon married Junot, and became Duchess of Abrantes. As will be seen hereafter, Napoleon at one period thought of marrying the widow Permon.

On the morning of August 10, Bonaparte had risen early at the sounding of the tocsin and had been a spectator of the fray, but nothing more. A brother of his friend Bourrienne, named Fauvelet, kept a bric-a-brac shop and a loan-office at the Place du Carrousel, and thither the future emperor of the French wended his way to pawn his watch. He needed money desperately that day and knew no way to get it but by pawning. He entered the pawnshop, and, after the usual higgling and haggling, obtained on the security of his time-piece fifteen francs, a trifling sum, which, however, meant five days' living to him. "At any rate," thought Napoleon as he put the money in his pocket, "I shall not be quite penniless on this day of revolution."

He would have then left the shop, but the crowd in the streets blocked the way, so he remained and watched the fight. And at noon, when the victory of the people was assured, he went home in a pensive mood. Ay, positively sad, sickened by the smell of blood, saddened by the sight of corpses. Bonaparte never forgot the terrible spectacle he beheld on this tenth day of August. It produced a phenomenal impression upon his mind. In years to come he became "the great butcher of Europe," and thought but little of the oceans of his people's blood which he had caused to flow, and the mountains of dead bodies which had grown under his conquering feet. But he never forgot the tragedy he witnessed from the pawnshop on August the tenth.

Even when in St. Helena, looking backward on his bloody life, he often alluded with emotion and indignation to the innumerable victims of the Swiss guards and the Chevaliers du Poignard, and to the terrible sights he saw in the streets of Paris as he walked homeward on the tenth of August.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HANDSOME SERGEANT AND HER BROTHER.

SUCH was the man—obscure, unknown, a man of mystery—whom Catherine Sans-Gêne was now seeking in his little furnished room, in a modest hotel where he was waiting impatiently but industriously for the capricious and tardy goddess, whom men call Fortune, who had not yet, it would appear, fully decided to knock at his door.

The world seemed against him—nothing went right—everything went wrong. He was the victim of ill-luck.

On his return to his rooms on this tenth of August he rushed to work, which meant distraction from his cares, and a temporary oblivion of the terrible spectacle he had witnessed from the windows of the pawnshop.

He unrolled one of his geographical charts and carefully studied the region of the south of France, the border towns of the Mediterranean, especially Marseilles, and the seaport of Toulon where a royalist reaction was taking place, and which was menaced by an English fleet.

And ever and anon he pushed the map away, hid his head in his hands, and dreamed.

Oh! what dreams!

Visions of vanquished cities, which he entered as conqueror, riding a white horse, amid the acclamations of the crowd. Visions of triumphal marches, amid vanquished soldiers in strange lands, sometimes amid snow-storms, sometimes under tropical suns. Visions of feasts and processions in his honor, kings subdued by his sword, queens flinging themselves at his feet—an intoxication of glory—an apotheosis of conquest!

And then he would cease dreaming and face the realities of his little room, with its scanty furniture and its bare walls, and he would smile bitterly, ridiculing his own dreams. And then for the hundredth time he reviewed realistically his own situation.

His position was utterly deplorable, and no change seemed probable.

He had no money, no work, no friend, no protector. The minister of war was deaf to his entreaties, the courts seemed hostile.

He was in want, and he felt himself growing weak.

His ambition was blown to pieces by the winds of reality—his castle of hopes fell like a castle of cards.

He shuddered with the chills of disillusion—there is no other chill as cold as that.

An idea occurred to him in his desperation. Near his hotel a contractor was putting up some houses on a speculation, in the quarter of Paris known as "Nouvelle-France" (new France). He knew this contractor and might make terms with him. He would hire one of his houses and let out furnished rooms to poor devils not quite so poor as himself.

Then another idea struck him forcibly. He would leave France at once and forever, and offer himself and his sword to the Turks.

Then once more he looked at his map, studied it, particularly the basin of the Mediterranean, his birth-place. Perhaps some day, around the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, he would lead his cannoneers against perfidious Albion, against the hated English.

That, at least, was possible—probable—natural. But *when?* and *how?* Again a cold chill seized him—the subtle poison of discouragement, disappointment and despair froze the blood in his veins.

But by a mighty effort of the will he repressed his demoralizing thoughts, and resumed his work upon the chart, which had been interrupted by his dream.

At this moment some one tapped lightly twice on the door.

Bonaparte trembled. He who would have faced a world in arms, was frightened at what he thought might be the announcing of a dun. Brave men when penniless are cowards. He kept still—he did not move. Presently there was a third and louder knock.

"Perhaps it is old Maureard, my landlord, with my bill," thought Bonaparte. "Well, let him come." And then he cried, "Come in."

The door opened and a young man entered. Very young indeed—almost a boy—and as fresh and fair as a girl.

On the sleeves of his new coat he wore the stripes of a sergeant—new stripes.

Bonaparte looked at the youth in wonder. "What do you want with me?" he asked of the stranger. "Have you not made a mistake?"

The young sergeant saluted in military fashion.

"Have I not the honor to address Captain Bonaparte of the artillery?" he asked softly.

"I am he," was the reply. "Your business with me?"

The youth seemed embarrassed. "I am called René," he said hesitatingly.

"Well, your name has one advantage, it is short," said Bonaparte.

"Yes, and I am serving in the regiment of volunteers from Mayenne-et-Loire," continued the visitor, recovering confidence. "And," he added with a smile so charming as to atone for his rather conceited and effeminate speech, "they call me 'the handsome sergeant.'"

"And rightly," said Bonaparte, himself smiling, "though it seems to me that you are rather too gentle and too foppish for a soldier."

"Judge a soldier only when he is under fire," retorted "the handsome sergeant" proudly.

"Ah!" Bonaparte winced; "you are right," he said. The young stranger's words had touched the artillery officer on a sore spot. "Under fire," he growled, "I wonder if any one will ever see *me* there. But come, monsieur, to the point," he continued; "what do you want? what can I do?"

"Captain," answered the "handsome sergeant," "I have a brother, named Marcel."

"Oh, you have a—a brother named Marcel, have *you?*" repeated Bonaparte.

"Yes, captain, and my—my brother is detailed as a doctor in the Fourth Artillery regiment at Valencia."

"My regiment," said Bonaparte. Then correcting himself, "my *late* regiment," he said sadly.

"Yes, captain, and that is why I hoped to see you. Sergeant Lefebvre, whom I met this morning at the fight at the Tuileries, told me you were in Paris, and that I must call upon you."

"Brave Lefebvre, I know him well," said Bonaparte; "but why did he send you to me?"

"That you might perhaps by your influence, by word to the commander, get my brother exchanged so that we might be together."

Bonaparte thought deeply, and looked intently at "the handsome sergeant," who became more earnest, even impassioned in his pleadings.

"Oh, captain," he cried, "I want my brother, I want to see him, to nurse him, if he should be wounded. Oh, captain, help me to this great blessing. If only we can be together, we will never cease to bless you."

The handsome sergeant's voice grew husky with emotion; it sounded as though he were sobbing.

Bonaparte approached him. "You love your—your brother, do you not? Well, he is fortunate in having such a brother. But really I fear I can do nothing, or next to nothing for you. Lefebvre should have told you what he knows about me, that I am without employment, without commission. They have broken my sword. I know no one in Paris; my recommendation to the Fourth Artillery would be worse than useless. Why, my—my—*man*. I am myself looking for some one to help *me*. Still I will do for you and your—your brother what I can. I know the brother of an influential man, an old deputy who lives in the Rue Saint-Honoré, he is called Maximilian Robespierre. Perhaps he can obtain a favor for you that would be refused to me. Go see young Robespierre."

"Thanks, captain," cried the handsome sergeant joyfully; "and perhaps some day I may be able to prove my gratitude."

Here Bonaparte raised his hand, half smilingly, half seriously, and said slowly and meaningly:

"It seems to me, my pretty sergeant, that in your desire to enter the army, and be with your *brother*, you have changed the usual dress adopted by your sex."

The so-called handsome sergeant confessed her secret, which Bonaparte had penetrated. "Yes, I am a woman, but pardon me, *mon capitaine*, and don't betray me, for the love of God. Be generous. Oh, I know you will be. Respect my disguise. You will kill me if you divulge my deceit."

"Ah, I suspected your masquerade from the first," said Bonaparte, smiling reassuringly upon the girl in uniform. "But," he asked, "do not your chiefs—do not your comrades suspect? Do they see nothing?"

"Ah, captain, there are so many young men without beards in the army, and besides I do my duty seriously," answered the young girl proudly.

"I do not doubt it, but I do doubt about this Marcel of yours being your brother."

The handsome sergeant blushed.

"He is your lover, is he not?"

The handsome sergeant blushed more deeply still.

"Well," said Bonaparte kindly, "I do not ask your history, and I will keep your secret. If I can aid you, count on me. Go and see young Robespierre. Tell him his friend, Bonaparte, sent you to him."

He extended his hand to the handsome sergeant, who looked as if she could embrace him. Then in a transport of joy the girl-soldier bade him adieu and passed out radiant.

"Ah! how I envy her and him," muttered Bonaparte when left alone. "They love each other. They will fight for their country side by side. Happy lives, and, if must be, happy deaths, while I—" the melancholy look came over his face again.

He sat down at his table, spread out his chart, and studied the location of Toulon, the great seaport of the south. "Oh," he cried, "if I could but fight the English there."

And his eager finger pointed on the map to a point—a place unknown—a place visible to him alone—where he destroyed, in imagination, the British fleet.

CHAPTER X.

THE OATH UNDER THE POPLARS—THE INVOLUNTARY ENLISTMENT.

THE Count de Surgères, whose ancestral chateau, near Laval, was reflected, with its moldering old turrets, in the waters of the Mayenne, had sought shelter, at the very first mutterings of the Revolution, beyond the Rhine.

He had pitched his tent, near Coblenz, resolved to watch the course of events, not as a participator but in quiet as a spectator.

Nominally, he had entered the military service of the allied princes, but, claiming and receiving exemption, from his evident infirmities (though only fifty years of age), he devoted himself to high living and to looking on, under the protection of the royal and imperial armies, and enjoyed life as best he could in the little Rhenish town.

To tell the truth, the count had left his ancestral home not from love of the allied princes, nor yet from fear of the rising patriots. Domestic and personal reasons impelled him to this step. Himself a childless widower, he had contracted, years ago, a liaison with the wife of one of his nearest neighbors and most intimate friends, by whom he had an illegitimate child, whose existence of course was kept profoundly secret. No trouble had arisen, no suspicion was excited in the husband's breast, but the Count de Surgères grew tired of his friend's wife.

He began to weary of the slavery of love. The lady he had once so passionately adored, so guiltily worshiped, had grown not only older and uglier but heavier. She looked less attractive, and she weighed a great deal more. Formerly she was trim, tender, elegant, sylph-like—a Venus—but now she was simply so much avoirdupois. Her figure lay heavily on his soul. She was a leaden weight upon his spirits.

Of all ponderous bodies, the most ponderous is the woman we have ceased to love.

So he gladly accompanied the lady's husband to the wars, without going, as has been shown, to war.

As for his illegitimate daughter he left her to the care of one of his old hunt-keepers, called Father La Brisée, who had reared her as his own daughter. Her name was Renée, and she grew up to be beautiful. She had been educated above her station, and had accquired not only the health and heartiness of country life but the knowledge that is imparted in books and schools. She had been liberally though indirectly supplied with money by her parents, who did for her everything but acknowledge her, and she was serenely happy. Her favorite pastime was to accompany La Brisée on his hunting expeditions. She had fallen in love with Marcel, the miller's son. Renée was seventeen and Marcel was entering his twentieth year.

The miller's son had, like his sweetheart, received a liberal education. He had been designed for the church, but took up the study of medicine.

The two met every day beside the mill-stream, near a grove of poplars. Renée took a gun, and pretended to go hunting; Marcel took a book and pretended to be reading. It answered all purposes.

One day Mother Toinnon, the hunt-keeper's wife, surprised them in their retreat, and discovered their transparent secret. Neither she nor her husband made any objection; they felt sure that the real parents of the girl would not run any risk of compromising themselves by pretending to interfere. But the father of Marcel would not permit his son to marry Renée. Not that he knew aught against the girl, but because one Bertrand le Goëz, the notary and administrator of the Count de Surgères' affairs, desired himself to wed the girl, and had bribed Marcel's father, by favors to his mill, to aid him in his suit, and rid him of the rivalry of his son.

But Renée would have none of the notary, and she would have Marcel. She pledged herself to love him, and Marcel vowed to love her always, and to wed her at last.

They took an oath under the poplar trees beside the stream to be faithful to each other until death.

Bertrand le Goëz set his spies upon the lovers and then set his wits to work to part them. The notary and agent was in his little world a great man, and his influence was widespread. He caused constant annoyances to be placed in the way of Marcel, till the young and sensitive fellow was goaded into the idea of emigrating to America, whereupon Renée vowed to go with him to the new world. What was the old world to her without Marcel? what would any world, or all the worlds, have been to her without her lover?

"Renée, go to America! What do you say to that, old woman?" asked the hunt-keeper of his wife.

"Why, I say," answered the old woman, "that it will never do. The count would not permit it. I must tell these turtle doves something they do not know."

And then Renée learned, in the presence of Marcel, the secret of her parentage. But this revelation made not a whit of difference to the lovers. Marcel would have taken Renée for his wife had she been the illegitimate child of Lucifer himself, and thought himself honored as well as happy in so doing. As for Renée she held justly that her parents had forfeited all right to be consulted by her, in any affairs of the heart; as they had shown themselves without heart to her, caring more for the world's opinion than for her affection. She should, therefore, with or without their knowledge and consent, give herself to the man she loved. The irregularity of her birth placed her beyond the conventionalities of society, and she was free to love.

Already the Revolution was everywhere, even in the quiet country, even in the soul of a girl like Renée. The people, even young maidens, were thinking for themselves.

But ere long the morbidly sensitive soul of Marcel discovered a barrier to his union with Renée, a barrier he felt that a man of honor could not overcome. Renée, he found, owing to the pecuniary liberality of the count and his paramour, was comparatively rich, while he was comparatively poor. He could not consent to ruin or rob the woman he loved, by wedding her, and taking her from the sphere of those who were providing for her. No, he would go to America alone, and when he had become a rich man there, then he would send or come for Renée.

Yes, he publicly announced his intention of emigrating to America, when suddenly he was arrested on the charge of deserting his country. Of course the arrest had been instigated by the notary, his rival.

Marcel could not deny the fact that he was on the verge of leaving France forever, and that in itself was regarded as a crime in a Frenchman at that period. Consequently his arrest held good, and he was given the choice—if choice it was—of joining the army as a regimental surgeon, stationed at Angers, or of being sent to Angers as a prisoner.

Marcel was distracted, while Bertrand le Goëz watched him with evident enjoyment of his confusion. La Brisée and his wife looked on in dazed silence.

Renée meantime approached Marcel, and handing him a pen, begged him to sign a paper handed to him by the commmissioner who had arrested him, and which was an agreement to join the army as a surgeon.

"So you wish me to leave you, leave you defenseless, leave you to that wretch," said Marcel, pointing to Bertrand le Goëz.

Renée answered in a whisper, "Sign, go to the army, for," she added, sinking her voice still lower, "I shall go with you, I promise it."

"What!" cried Marcel in utter astonishment, "you go among soldiers, you go to the army."

"Why not?" said Renée calmly; "I can make up like a boy, and I have learned, as you know, in my hunting expeditions with my father here," pointing to La Brisée, whom she regarded still as her parent, "to shoot like a man. I tell you I will join you, so sign."

And so Marcel signed. Bertrand le Goëz retired, rubbing his hands gleefully. He had gained his end. Marcel had signed, his rival was going away; Renée, of whose birth he knew the secret, was in the toils. Marcel would never return, and if he did, by that time Renée would be Madame le Goëz. But he calculated without Renée.

She met Marcel under the poplars—at the old trysting place—that night. She was the calmer of the two, and she solemnly repeated her promise to join him in his regiment.

"I will make a fine-looking soldier," she assured him, laughing gayly.

"But the fatigue," said he; "the rations."

"I can endure the one and eat the other."

"But if you should be wounded?"

"Are you not a surgeon?"

No more was to be said and Marcel started for his regiment. Several days after the departure of Marcel, about dusk, a young man was walking along the country road slowly but steadily in the direction of Angers. He carried a bundle of clothes on a cane, and wore the uniform of the National Guards. Arriving at Angers he enrolled himself at the mayor's office as a volunteer, and gave the name of Renée Marcel, the son of Marcel the miller. He was assigned to the battalion of Mayenne-et-Loire.

The young man had said that he wished to join the company with which his brother Marcel was connected, and so she was admitted without any difficulty or the least suspicion. She was not by hundreds the only girl who served in the French army as a man. The regiments of the revolution were full of female recruits.

Among the military annals of the Republic there are many records of glorious service rendered by these hero-women—these warrior-maids—these Joans of Arc. Their names give luster to a deathless page.

Renée became a prime favorite with her regiment, and soon rose to the rank of silver stripes. She was known far and wide as "the handsome sergeant." For a brief while the united lovers were supremely happy, spite the barriers between them; then, as the Fates would have it, they were separated, Marcel being sent to the Fourth Artillery at Valence, where, as at Toulon, they were badly in need of doctors.

The hour for parting came. They were compelled to hide their feelings from the whole regiment that witnessed their last interview.

They embraced each other and promised soon to meet again.

They took it for granted that heaven would arrange things for their benefit. It is a way young lovers have.

Then Renée came, on leave of absence to Paris, and called on Bonaparte, as we have seen and heard already.

And, thanks to the protection and influence of young Robespierre, who was indeed very friendly to young Bonaparte, the exchange the lovers so ardently desired was effected, and under the command of Beaurepaire, the defender-hero of Verdun, Renée who enlisted for love, marched side by side with Marcel, the doctor and the philosopher, who was by this time a full-fledged disciple of Jean Jacques Rousseau, the apostle of peace, a citizen of the world, but who had enlisted because he could not help it.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CONFIDENCE OF MADAME SANS-GENE AND WHY SHE DID NOT PRESENT HER LAUNDRY BILL.

After "the handsome sergeant" had taken his or her departure, Bonaparte, resuming his train of thought, began once more his studies of his chart. Already he had conceived vast projects, some of which were subsequently undertaken, for the defense of the Mediterranean coast. And to-day he cast a keen yet glowing glance at the place on the chart where were indicated those mountains between France and Piedmont—the key to Italy.

He looked and formed strategic combinations in his brain. He gazed upon the chart, then grasped it as if already master of the lands and seas it represented.

In the midst of his busy, brilliant meditations, a knock at the door caused him to raise his head. He was impatient at being again disturbed. "Who comes now," he thought, "some creditor, or another visitor? Probably the latter, for it seems fated to be a day of visits. "Who's there?" he growled.

A woman's voice—unmistakably this time a woman's—was heard outside. "It is I," it said, and for further explanation of the "I," the voice continued: "Catherine, the laundress."

"Come in, then," he growled again.

The laundress was not accustomed to meet such an unwelcome reception. She felt a little hurt, and, for a wonder for her, just the least bit in the world embarrassed. She entered quietly, however, and taking her basket from her arm, said almost with an apology to the man who was so rude to her: "Pray, do not disturb yourself, captain, I have brought your wash. I—I thought that possibly you might need your clothes."

"The captain" did not even deign to look up from his chart. "The wash," he said, "very well." Then he added in a tone of command, "Put them there on the bed."

Catherine for a moment stood stock still. She was amazed, she was paralyzed, she was not accustomed to be commanded by her customers, especially by a customer in arrears. For a moment she neither advanced toward the bed nor retreated toward the door, but kept her basket in her hand, uncertain what to do. But finally she did as she was told, and put the clothes upon the bed. "I feel like a fool," she thought to herself, as she obeyed Bonaparte, and arranged his wash upon his cot, "but this man imposes his will upon me in a way I cannot resist. He masters me in a manner that is beyond my power to control."

Yes, the woman who was famous all through the Saint-Roche quarter of Paris for doing as she pleased, and for being afraid of nobody, the woman who was known as Sans-Gêne, and who justified that title, felt really timid in the presence of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Many a king and queen in after years resembled Madame Sans-Gêne in this respect.

Having arranged the clothes, she stared at the bed. She shifted her basket on her arm, and then, as if a sudden thought had occurred to her, she felt in her apron pocket for the bill which she brought with her, and which she fully intended to present to him this time, with a demand for payment.

And yet she did not dare—yes, "dare" is the word—to present that bill. As the saying is, "she shook in her shoes" before him.

While Bonaparte continued, utterly heedless of her presence, to study the chart before him.

She was not accustomed to being thus entirely ignored, this Madame Sans-Gêne, and felt uneasy under this new sensation. At last she gave her dress a rustle, she shook herself slightly, to remind him of her presence, to let the ex-captain of the artillery know that she was there.

But at first he took no heed of her little stratagem. "Well," thought Catherine, huffed, "he certainly is not at all gallant. He heeds me no more than if I was not a woman, and a good-looking one, some say. Though even if one is decent and proper, and doesn't come for anything out of the way, yet one may be worth looking at."

And once more she rustled her dress and made a movement.

Bonaparte looked up from his chart, but he merely said: "Oh, you are still here, I see," and looked down again. Then raising his eyes after a minute or more, during which period Catherine stood dumfounded, he asked her almost rudely, certainly abruptly, "What *do* you want?"

"Citizen," answered Catherine eagerly, now that he had really said something to her, "I wanted to—" She paused.

"To what?" asked Bonaparte.

She had intended to say: "Ask you for some money," but what she really said now was: "To tell you that I am about to be married."

At that moment the laundress *could* not have asked her delinquent customer to settle his little bill. No, not even if Lefebvre had told her to do so.

She felt glad to escape the bill by talking of herself and her love affairs—something personal, not pecuniary. She preferred to take her customer into her confidence rather than to present his account.

Bonaparte at her communication looked at her with a shade of annoyance in his face. Her naive confession served to pleasantly distract his brooding fancies. He thought of "the pretty sergeant" and her love secret. This was the second affair of the heart that had been forced upon his notice within the hour.

He glanced at Catherine as she stood before him. Rosy as a red-cheeked pippin, with her fine bust heaving under her linen kerchief. Either her allusion to her marriage, or the presence of the ex-artillery captain, made her lose the gift she most prided herself upon—her self-possession. She was a pretty sight to look at, and Bonaparte, in spite of himself, smiled approvingly.

"Ah, you are going to marry," he said, coldly perhaps, but not as before roughly. "Well, so much the better for you, my girl." Then more kindly, "I wish you joy."

Catherine courtesied.

"I presume," continued Bonaparte, "that you are going to marry some good fellow who keeps a laundry."

"Keeps a laundry!" repeated Catherine, almost with scorn. "No, indeed, I am going to marry a soldier, a sergeant."

"Ah, is it so;" said Bonaparte more kindly. "You do well to marry a soldier, mademoiselle. To be a soldier is to be doubly a Frenchman. Once more I wish you joy."

And then he looked down upon his chart again. But Catherine, somehow, did not leave the room. And soon Bonaparte looked up at her and smiled.

Really, even in ill-luck, one could not help smiling at Catherine. She looked so plump, so pretty, so rosy-cheeked, and so mischievous, although her manner had seemed to be so reserved, and she had looked so demurely, hypocritically quiet, when she had entered the room with her basket on her arm.

Bonaparte was pleased with her appearance. Above all, he was pleased to notice she was stout—not too stout, however; perhaps "plump" is the word. Bonaparte as man and as emperor was always fond of large, plump women. When young and poor and an officer, when older and more nervous as a consul, and when in full feather as the ruler of Europe, Napoleon always surrounded himself with plump women, if he could.

And now, at this particular moment, Catherine's well-rounded beauty charmed him and drew him out of the sphere of his strategetical calculations.

He even felt inclined to play the gallant with her. But he was always rather brutally direct in his advances, and now he almost rushed at the young laundress, and put his heavy hand upon her soft, white neck.

Thereupon Catherine promptly shrieked, not shrilly, but very properly, yet not loud enough to summon anybody to her assistance.

Bonaparte never hesitated either in war or love. He began the attack, he redoubled his attentions and embraces, he made the laundress retreat, but toward the bed. Reaching that, however, Catherine sat down, and insisting on sitting bolt upright commenced to defend herself. This she did, without any false modesty, however, and without showing that she felt frightened, or even implying that there was anything to be frightened at.

Bonaparte by this time had forgotten all about his charts, his ambition, Toulon and the Mediterranean. His sole aim now was to reach Catherine, and to conquer his laundress. The latter made, as it were, an outwork of her basket; she placed it before her, and between her pursuer and herself, like a gabion; exclaiming, as she did so: "No, no, captain! it is too late for this. You cannot take me, for I have already capitulated. So my husband says."

"Really," said Bonaparte, desisting from his gallantries. "Oh, then this marriage of yours is really something serious."

"Very serious indeed to me," answered Catherine, rising, and then, wishing to turn the conversation, she said: "And I came to tell you, that as I am going to be married, I cannot do your washing any longer."

"What! will you shut up shop, my pretty one?"

"Yes; for a shop would do badly in such times as these. And then, besides, like a good wife I shall want to follow my husband."

"What! in his regiment—on the march?" asked Bonaparte.

"Why not?" asked Catherine.

"I've met a case like yours before," said Bonaparte, thinking of the handsome sergeant. "Ah! the army will have more than one family," he muttered.

"So you, too, are going to fire powder and, perhaps, manage a cannon," he continued, addressing Catherine in a bantering, almost teasing manner.

"I have already learned how to use a gun," said Catherine; "but I have had no experience yet with cannon. I should be glad to take lessons from you in artillery matters, *mon capitaine*," she went on laughingly, "but you see my husband that is to be is in the infantry. But seriously, captain, I shall not fight if I can help it, but I want to aid and comfort the fighters. They need canteen carriers in the regiments, and I intend to carry drink to my husband's comrades. I may even hope to have your patronage, Captain Bonaparte," she exclaimed, with a low courtesy, "if you should serve with us."

"Consider me one of your best customers, mademoiselle," said Bonaparte; "but," he added somewhat sadly, "not yet. The minister of war will not let me fight or—" eat, he was about to say, but he checked himself and substituted the words "nor spend money at the canteen. But perhaps things may all come round in time, but later on, perhaps, too late."

He sighed and went back to his chart and table. Catherine, without a word, respecting his feelings and his work, rearranged the wash upon the bed, gave the snowy little pile a few last feminine smoothings, and then, disturbed in her own breast by the sadness of her customer, whose story she knew well, she with a silent courtesy left him, but suddenly she returned. "Oh," she said hurriedly, "I forgot to tell you, captain, but I ruined one of your shirts by accident, but I have replaced it. It is there, the new shirt, along with the drawers and the handkerchiefs." Then more slowly and softly, she said: "*Au revoir, mon capitaine.*"

Bonaparte looked up from his chart with one of those rare, sweet, potent smiles of his. "*Au revoir, ma belle*," he replied, "and luck to your canteen," then he turned him to his chart.

Catherine walked slowly down the stairs of the Hotel de Metz, and while descending thought of various things. First she half smiled, half frowned as she recalled how she had resolved to present the man she had just left with his wash bill, and how she had utterly failed, never even alluding to the bill.

"I really hadn't the courage to tell him about it. Somehow he can do everything with me, that Bonaparte, everything but make me forget Lefebvre. But he'll pay me some day; I believe in him; he is bound to rise, and there's no telling how high, either. Men like him are not easily satisfied. Fouché laughs at him, or pretends to, but I have every faith in this Bonaparte. I am sure he will make his way."

Then she recalled, half smiling, half blushing, the memories of Bonaparte's recent attempts at gallantry. "How he tormented me, that captain; he even forgot his chart and papers for me. Well, there was no harm in it, *pour passer le temps!* It didn't hurt me, and it amused him, and poor fellow, he has had but little amusement lately. Poor young man!"

She paused, blushed a little more, and added, in her thoughts: "If he had really desired it. But, oh, no, not now; at some other time, before I was promised to Lefebvre. In that case it might have been," and she felt a sort of retrospective regret for her own coyness to the thin sad-eyed artillery captain.

"But," she continued to herself gayly, "he did not think of it really, or he would not have done it."

Then her reflections took a new direction. "Enough of this Bonaparte," she thought; "I must run and see if my Lefebvre is not at the shop. He may be growing impatient, and I must not keep *him* waiting, for he loves me well. He will make me a far better husband than Captain Bonaparte."

Full of anticipation, she walked through the streets quickly, and as she reached her shop she found a crowd around it. There were noises and cries, laughter, and merriment. The entire neighborhood was aroused, and looking she saw Lefebvre, no longer with a gun, and without his buff coat, but bearing in his hand a splendid sword, ornamented with a golden dragon. His comrades joyously surrounded him; he was the center of attraction; they were carrying him along in triumph.

Lefebvre saw Catherine and stopped in his triumphal march beside her. "I am now a lieutenant," he cried proudly.

Catherine's plump figure seemed to expand, though she could not speak a word. She was silent from sheer fullness of pride.

"Long live Lieutenant Lefebvre," shouted the members of the National Guard, throwing their hats up into the air, and twirling their guns.

"And long live Citizeness Lefebvre here," cried the new lieutenant, pointing to the happy Catherine. "She is my wife, my comrades, or will be. We are to be married next week."

"Long live Citizeness Lefebvre," shouted the guards again, with more throwing up of hats and more twirling of guns. And "long live Madame Sans-Gêne," shouted all the crowd of neighbors and bystanders. For Catherine was popular throughout the quarter.

Catherine smiled and acknowledged the compliments bestowed upon her. Still, thoughtful of others, even in the moment of her own glory, she whispered to Lefebvre: "Let them not shout so loud, for" (mindful of the Chevalier du Poignard, still lying on her bed in her room) "they will make our sick man worse."

Meantime, in his little cheerless room in the Hotel de Metz Bonaparte had finished for the day his study of his chart, and had turned his attention to his clothes. He was orderly and systematic in his habits, and he took the various pieces of linen which the laundress had laid down on his bed, and re-arranged them on a plain deal shelf along the wall.

Then he looked for something and could not find it. "She has forgotten to leave the bill," he said. "Well, it is better so, for I would have had to tell her that I could not pay her to-day, nor to-morrow," he sighed, "nor the day after. She is a good soul and I must owe her, let me see," he calculated, "thirty francs at least. The devil!" he ejaculated, "thirty francs; that is a good deal of money to her, and more to me. I shall settle with her in full as soon as ever I get anything. She is a good, kind girl this Catherine, as well as a pretty and a plump one, and I shall not forget her or her bill. But now I must dress; it is the day I dine with the Permons—my one dinner a week." And the future emperor prepared to change his clothes and to attire himself in his only good suit.

And as he dressed he thought kindly of Catherine Sans-Gêne, and was touched alike by the confidence she had reposed in him concerning her own love affairs, and the delicacy she had shown in forgetting to present him with his little bill. "For she forgot it on purpose, I am half-inclined to believe," said Bonaparte, to himself.

The delicacy and the little confidential communication of Catherine, his laundress, lingered long in Napoleon's memory, and led him years afterward to speak and think with favor of her.

As for Catherine, after many years had passed, she received, in the most unexpected manner, more than payment of the wash bill she had "forgotten" to present.

And our readers, as they follow us in the pages of this story, will find again, and hear more about the personages we have already introduced to them. The love affairs and personal adventures of the Chevalier du Poignard, the Count de Neipperg and his lovely Blanche, the marches of the pretty sergeant and her devoted Marcel, these will be related in full. Little Henriot will figure in the future of the story, new personages will be introduced, and new light will be shed on the personalities of Napoleon and of Josephine.

And, above all, the numerous escapades and exciting adventures of Catherine Upscher, the laundress, later on the Maréchale Lefebvre, and Duchess de Dantzig, will be given to the world, the life narrative of the woman, ever sympathetic, ever popular, the good girl, the jolly companion, the heroic and charitable woman, who bore the Parisian nickname of Madame Sans-Gêne.

BOOK SECOND.

THE CANTEEN BEARER.

CHAPTER XII.

THE POST-CHAISE—THE FRUIT SHOP—THE LADY OF ST. CYR—NAPOLEON'S FIRST DEFEAT.

"AH, see, they will not stop here. The postilion cracks his whip as he passes L'Ecu; he does not seem to even see us."

"Travelers are not as numerous as they should be nowadays."

"They are out of sight. They are going to the Lion d'Or."

"Or, perhaps, to the Cheval Blanc."

Such were the words, alternated with sighs, exchanged between the fat inn-keeper of the Hotel de L'Ecu and his equally fat wife, as they stood on the threshold of the chief tavern at Dammarten, looking at a vehicle which had passed on.

Passengers in coaches were rare indeed after the events which transpired after the fifteenth of June.

And the vehicle which had appeared to and then disappeared from the longing gaze of the inn-keeper at L'Ecu, had left Paris early that evening, and was really the last coach which got safely over the border.

For an order had been issued to prevent any equipage from leaving Paris that very night, as soon as the Parisians had resolved to take the Tuileries at dawn.

The coach contained the Baron de Lowendaal and his factotum, Leonard.

The baron, scenting danger, had postponed his marriage with Mdlle. Laveline, and had left Paris, traveling like one who feared for his life.

He was bound for his chateau near the village of Jemmapes, on the Belgian border. He thought he certainly would be safe from the revolution there; besides, the army of the Prince of Brunswick was assembled on the Belgian frontier.

Fearful as the baron was, yet he was also hopeful. He would still marry Mdlle. Laveline on the sixth of November. Meanwhile he would arrange some pressing business matters at the town of Verdun, where he owned a large tobacco farm.

His man Leonard saw to the creature comforts of the baron on his travels, arranged the relays of horses, and attended to all other minor matters.

This man Leonard was as keen as he was servile and unprincipled.

Not dreaming of his real character, or lack of character, it was to this cunning rascal that Mademoiselle Blanche de Laveline had entrusted the letter already alluded to, in which she had confessed all to the baron.

This letter, the young lady had instructed him, was not to be given to the baron till he had left Paris. This injunction set Leonard's wits to work. What could such a mysterious letter contain?

"The secrets of masters and mistresses are the fortunes of servants," said Leonard, as he finally and deliberately opened and read the letter. Its contents were as follows:

"Monsieur le Baron: I owe you a guilty

avowal, which I must make, that I may dispel an illusion concerning me, which facts would not take long to disclose.

"You have given me some affection, and you have obtained my father's consent to a marriage in which you have thought to find happiness, perhaps love.

"Good fortune cannot come to you from such a union; I could promise you no love, for my heart belongs to another. Forgive me that I do not give you his name, who possesses all my soul, and whose wife I consider myself to be, before God!

"I have a final revelation to make to you. I am a mother, Monsieur le Baron, and death alone could part me from my husband, the father of my little Henriot. I shall follow M. de Laveline to Jemmapes, since he desires it; but I trust that, informed of the obstacle which stands immovably against the fufillment of your plans, you will pity and spare me the shame of having to tell my father the real cause which makes this union impossible.

"I rely, monsieur, on your discretion as a gallant man. Burn this letter and believe in my gratitude and my friendship.

"BLANCHE."

Leonard's surprise on reading this letter was great—his satisfaction was greater. "Who would have imagined that Mademoiselle Blanche had an illegitimate child, and who on earth would have imagined that she would confess the fact to the baron of all men. What creatures women are! She doesn't know how stupid she was to commit herself thus in writing. It is well for her it was I who discovered her secret. Well, she can't deny her own handwriting. Happily it is I to whom she has confided her honor and her fortune. She will pay well for this scrap of paper some day—after she has become Baroness de Lowendaal. I shall ask a stiff price for it, and perhaps I may want more than money. Mademoiselle is handsome, and will be wholly in my power; but this is an after consideration. I must now guard this paper, and encourage more than ever my master's hopes of marrying mademoiselle."

While Leonard was reading the letter intended for the baron and soliloquizing over it, the baron was wondering where Leonard had gone to. But returning to the inn, the servant explained to his master that he had been making the final preparations for their departure to Verdun.

The baron was satisfied, and in high spirits re-entered the carriage, which rolled thundering along the road which was no longer "the king's highway."

At the door of her fruit shop, in the Rue de Montreuil, at Versailles, Mother Hoche was serving her customers, and occasionally watching a little rosy, chubby boy, who was playing between the piles of cabbage and the heaps of carrots.

"Henriot! Henriot! don't eat that! you will make yourself sick," she cried out, now and then, as the little fellow tackled the raw carrots and turnips.

And then thinking, "What an appetite the little imp has, to be sure, but what a sweet babe he is, all the same," she turned and waited on her customers.

Suddenly she gave a loud cry of surprise and joy, for she saw a tall young fellow, in a grenadier's uniform, approaching her, accompanied by a good-looking lieutenant with a buxom woman leaning on his arm.

The newcomers were Lazare Hoche, Mother Hoche's adopted son, and Lieutenant and Madame Lefebvre.

After salutations and conversation Lefebvre and Hoche departed for a stroll—so they said—and the two women remained behind. Mother Hoche preparing a ragout of goose and turnips to greet the two men on their return, Catherine helping to scrape the turnips, also to shell peas, and kill a chicken for a stuffed omelette to complete the repast.

And then the two women talked about little Henriot, and Catherine told Mother Hoche how she had been sent by the child's mother to take him from her.

Mother Hoche was very sorry to part with the little fellow, to whom she had become greatly attached.

"Must you take the boy away at once?" she asked of Catherine. "Can't you leave him here with me and call for him at some other time, at the very last moment?"

"But I can't call again," said Catherine; "for I am going with my husband to the army."

"You—pretty one," said Mother Hoche amazed; "you going to the wars?"

"Yes," replied Catherine, "I have a commission in my pocket as canteen-bearer to the thirteenth regiment."

And she drew from her bosom a great official document, signed and sealed with the war-office seal. "I must join my regiment in eight hours. We are going to Verdun to root out the royalists there who are conspiring with Brunswick."

"Ah! so you are going to be a canteen-bearer," said old Mother Hoche, looking as she felt, envious of Catherine's luck. "Ah, it is a fine lot—none finer, to my notion. One marches to the beat of the drum, one sees the country, one always carries welcome, as well as wine, with one; for the soldier is at his best at the side of the canteen. He forgets his misery, he dreams of being a corporal, maybe a general, and then when the battle begins," cried the old woman, excited at her own words; "one feels that one is not a useless woman, mere tears and fears, but a part of the army, giving courage to the defenders of one's native land, making heroes with her *eau de vie* at two sous per glass. Ah! the *cantinière's* cask has more than once decided the conflict and given the victory; but," becoming calmer, "how are you going to take care of little Henriot?" she asked, "in the camp, in march and battle?"

"Oh," answered Catherine, with some pride, "I can see to that well enough. As canteen-bearer of the Thirteenth Regiment I am entitled to a horse and wagon, and we have already bought a complete turnout." She spoke as though she were describing her equipage in the Bois. "I sold out my laundry, and Lefebvre when he married received a small inheritance from his father, the miller, and with our economy we will want for nothing. The little lad shall be treated like a general's son."

Mother Hoche was fain to be content, but at that moment Lazare Hoche and Lefebvre returned from their stroll. Hoche wore a bloody handkerchief for a bandage; it covered half his face, hiding a deep cut, which always remained a scar.

"*Mon Dieu!*" cried Mother Hoche, "where have you been *walking?* what has happened? Ah, you have taken him somewhere where they have tried to kill him, Lieutenant Lefebvre," she continued angrily.

But Hoche explained, after quieting his adopted mother's fears, and showing that he was not seriously hurt.

He had been fighting a duel, with Lefebvre for his second, with a lieutenant named Serre, who had not only ill-treated himself, but insulted the wife of his friend, Lefebvre.

Lefebvre would have taken a principal's share in the duel himself, but Hoche had two wrongs to avenge—his own as well as his friend's—and so took precedence. The explanations being made, and Catherine, who had been privy to the affair, having warmly thanked her husband's comrade, and the champion of her honor, Lefebvre clamored for something to eat. "Yes, as your ragout is ready, dear old mother," said Hoche, "let us talk of other matters, and discuss your goose and turnips——"

"And chicken omelette," added Catherine.

"But your wound, I cannot forget that, my boy," cried old Mother Hoche.

"Bah!" said Hoche, as he and the rest sat down to the ragout and omelette; "I have forgotten it already, and doubtless ere long the Austrians and Russians will give me some more cuts, so one more or less won't matter; besides it is dry already. See."

And almost gayly the brave lad raised the handkerchief which covered his head, and showed the wound which, however, always remained a deep scar, marring the martial countenance of the man who became the famous fighting general of Sambre-et-Meuse.

The repast ended, Mother Hoche and Catherine made every preparation for the departure of little Henriot.

They packed his holiday clothes in a trunk, and to its contents were added boxes of sweetmeats, cakes and candies, the gift of old Mother Hoche.

The child himself considerably helped the preparations for his departure. Childhood loves change.

Childhood is also carelessly ungrateful. Little Henriot forgot the tenderness of old Mother Hoche, and rejoiced in the prospect of going away with Catherine.

Meanwhile Lefebvre and young Hoche sat alongside of the Montreuil road, laughing, smoking, and watching the crowd of passers-by.

This Montreuil, called at present the Avenue de Saint-Cloud, was then the highway for foot passengers from Paris—farmers, soldiers, rustics.

For economy, many travelers took the river boat to La Samaritaine, at the Pont Neuf, and from the Sèvres bridge went on foot to and from Versailles.

Among these last, Lefebvre suddenly caught a glimpse of a thin, short young man, with rather long hair, with a uniform of the artillery corps, but rather shabby, almost worn out. He seemed in a hurry and was escorting a young girl in a faded black dress, carrying in her hand a small package, half box, half bundle, and both man and girl seemed sad.

"I do believe that's Captain Bonaparte," said Lefebvre.

"Who's Bonaparte?" asked Hoche.

"A good Republican, an excellent artilleryman, a red-hot Jacobin, and a Corsican," replied Lefebvre. "He got into some trouble in his native island—they are mostly aristocrats there. But I'll ask my wife about him, she knows him better than I do."

He called for Catherine who came, somewhat surprised.

"What does my husband want?" she asked, placing her hands on her wide hips, her favorite attitude, a habit which clung to her long in after life.

"Is not that man yonder Captain Bonaparte?" asked Lefebvre, pointing.

"Yes," said Catherine positively; "I'd know him in a million, and not because he owes me for his washing either," she added. "I like that Captain Bonaparte, but what is he doing with that girl?"

"Call him and find out," suggested Lefebvre.

"All right," cried Catherine; "and we had better invite him and the girl to take refreshment. He must be warm and tired, and the road is dusty, but go you and ask him."

Lefebvre ran and overtook Bonaparte. The latter vowed that he was neither warm nor thirsty, and said further that he and his companion were in a hurry to take the boat at Sèvres.

"Bah! there's another boat in about five hours," said Lefebvre; "and doubtless, mademoiselle," addressing the girl, "would like to rest a moment."

The girl intimated that she was dry and tired, and so the pair followed Lefebvre.

A table was brought out from the fruit shop into the street, chairs were placed around it, and glasses and some bottles of good sour wine were placed upon it.

They all sat down and drank to the nation, and Bonaparte became more cheerful.

"My sister, ladies and comrades," he said, introducing the young girl.

Yes, the young woman was his sister Marie-Anne, better known as Elisa, who, ere many years, during her brother's period of glory, wedded a prince, and became Grand Duchess of Tuscany.

She was ugly, this future princess and grand duchess, and cross—by no means a pleasing personage. Tall, dark, thin, with sallow complexion, prominent chin, sensual lips, oval head, and deep, piercing eyes. She had far more brains than beauty, and her manner was haughty and repellent.

She seemed to covertly sneer at the very men and women whose hospitality she and her brother were accepting. To her they were but common men and women, in some way connected with a fruit shop, while she was a demoiselle of Saint-Cyr, who had been educated at the public expense. She really thought herself descended from Jupiter.

Elisa Bonaparte had been one of the elect, selected some years since by a lucky chance, to be a pupil at the Royal School, although her brother Napoleon had turned out a Democrat. How such a chance had happened Napoleon himself never fully understood.

But his sister had availed herself of it to the utmost, and even Napoleon had thought it a capital piece of good luck, and had been loath to take Elisa away. But a national decree had closed the school, and he was compelled to take his sister home.

But this misfortune, so he regarded it, had been more than compensated by the minister of war having at last consented to see him, and having restored him to his former rank in the French army.

Whereupon, on hearing this, all the company congratulated him, and prophesied his future success.

"Ah!" cried Napoleon, "if I *do* succeed, my friends, you shall share my harvest." He meant what he said, and kept his promise fully afterward.

Finally it came time to part.

"We may meet again, Captain Bonaparte," said young Hoche, as he shook hands with his colleague.

"On the road to glory," said Lefebvre.

"Yes," said Bonaparte, "but to get there I must first get the boat at the Sèvres bridge," and he started off quickly with his sister. The two talked on the road.

"How do you like the captain?" asked Bonaparte.

"Do you mean Captain Lefebvre?" asked his sister.

"No, not he," replied Bonaparte, "for he's married to that pretty Catherine. No, the other captain, Lazare Hoche."

"Oh, he's not so bad," said the young lady.

"Humph! how would you like him for a husband?" said her brother.

The future grand duchess blushed, and made an impatient gesture.

Her brother interpreted that gesture as a sign of her dislike to the idea he had suggested. "It's a pity," he said, "for Hoche is a good soldier and I think he is one of the men with a future."

"Oh, I did not mean that Monsieur Hoche displeases me, but I could never marry any man who does not believe in a king, who is not devoted to some king. Whereas *he* is a Republican."

The young girl talked like the ardent royalist she was, such was the result of her education at Saint-Cyr. No wonder one of the first acts of the Republic was to close that institution.

This talk about Hoche illustrates one feature of the character of Napoleon Bonaparte—one feature which always and materially influenced his career. He was ever thinking how to marry his sisters advantageously, always haunted by the specter of his family, ever seeing the depressing vision of his mother, surrounded by her children, in a cheerless home, with an empty cupboard, and a fireless hearth. He felt the responsibility of being practically the head of a family fully as deeply as he did being the head of a nation.

He considered marriage as the great means of lifting his family from obscurity and want, ay, and of elevating himself. He looked upon any advantageous union (advantageous in a worldly, material sense), however unsuited personally might be the parties, as the chief refuge against poverty, the main instrument of fortune.

As for himself marriage was the one step by which he could at once rise from the petty rank of captain to—who could tell what height. How easily he, once well married, could conquer *all* positions.

And yet his first determined effort in the matrimonial line for himself was a fiasco, a defeat.

Allusion has already been made to his friends, the Permons, with whom, in his days of poverty in Paris, he dined occasionally. Madame Permon (mother of the future Duchess of Abrantes), was by birth a Greek, who had lived in Corsica, and she was still a handsome woman.

She was middle-aged also, but she dressed to look young, and she believed in being luxuriously surrounded with furniture and bric-a-brac in the Louis XV. style. And as Bonaparte in his youth had but scanty opportunities to mingle with grand dames in their palaces, Madame Permon seemed to the poor, obscure young Corsican, a very queen of elegance and grace. He was dazzled with her wardrobe, but he did not see her wrinkles. He was charmed that she was plump; he did not reflect that soon she would be gross. The Permons were well-to-do; the last consideration settled it.

He endeavored to interest Madame Permon first in his plans of marrying off the members of his own family. He attempted to make a match between madame's young son and his sister Pauline (who was the beauty of the Bonapartes); then he suggested a union between Mademoiselle Permon (madame's young daughter), and his brother Louis, or his brother Jerome. It really did not matter to him, just then, which brother.

"Really," said madame to him one day, laughing, "*Mon cher* Napoleon, you are a very great priest; you wish to administer the sacrament of marriage on a most extensive scale. You want to marry all the world, even the children."

Bonaparte affected to laugh with the lady, but he rather confusedly confessed that he *was* anxious to see his family settled for life, and then, with his usual abrupt, direct style of gallantry, such as he had adopted with Madame Sans-Gêne, he seized the astonished Madame Permon's beringed hand, and kissed it, once, twice, with burning lips.

And having kissed, he told his love, or rather his desires and his aspirations. He wanted her to marry him, and thus indeed unite their respective families.

The lady in her surprise, not knowing what else to do, laughed at her suitor.

Bonaparte was hurt. The worst treatment a woman can give her suitor is to laugh at his suit.

Madame, as soon as she could check her laughter, hastened to explain.

She assumed a maternal tone: "My dear Napoleon, she said, as if addressing her own son, "let us be serious."

"Madame," said Napoleon, with *empressement*, "I never was more serious in my life—I——"

"But," interrupted the lady, "you do not even know my age."

"What man—what gentleman," said Bonaparte, "ever can, or seeks to, know a lady's age. Some one has written, you know, that 'women, like music, should never be dated.'"

"All very fine," said madame, smiling, "but for all that you cannot even guess how old I am; I shall not tell you my exact number of years—it is one of my little foibles to hide that secret. But believe me," she continued, "I am old enough to be your mother, or for that matter, your elder brother Joseph's mother. So let us have no more of this nonsense, for I must confess, that coming from one whom I esteem as I do you, it hurts me."

"Ah, madame, I did not know that I was talking 'nonsense,'" said Napoleon; "nor did I imagine that in asking you to marry me I was making myself ridiculous. As for me, what care I for the age of the woman I marry—I marry the woman, not her years. And besides, without any flattery, you do not seem to be over thirty."

Madame Permon, like the true woman she was, despite Bonaparte's disclaimer, did feel flattered, and she began to think almost tenderly of the flatterer. But she forced herself to say: "Ah, *mon cher*, I am older, much older, than that."

"Be it so—it matters not—I do not care," cried Bonaparte, carried away by the ardor he really at this moment felt. "You are young, you are charming, unto me."

Madame smiled. How could she, or any other woman in her place, help smiling!

"And," continued the young man with redoubled ardor, glancing fervently at the old-young lady, "you are the woman I have dreamed of for years, as my chosen companion."

He really thought at that moment that he was speaking the truth.

For a moment madame wavered, then she said: "And if I do not consent to the folly you suggest, what then will you do?"

"Seek elsewhere for the companionship you deny me," replied Bonaparte promptly. "Marry, and marry soon, I must, I shall," he added, after a pause. "Some of my friends have already selected a wife for me, a woman almost as charming as yourself—a woman about your own age—of noble birth and character. I shall be forced to marry her, if you be cruel. Reflect, madame, reflect."

It was a curious speech for a suitor to make to the woman to whom he was proposing. In some respects it was a dangerous speech, in other points it was about the wisest he could have uttered under the circumstances.

But, as it happened, Madame Permon was not specially impressed by Bonaparte's words one way or the other. The truth was that she really loved in secret a cousin of hers, who was a great rascal—a Greek by the name of Stephanopolis. Worthless as the fellow was, she worshiped him. She had already introduced him to Bonaparte, and was doing all that lay in her power to procure him a position in the Guard of the Convention, a military organization then forming.

And it was really for her love for this prosaic, everyday fellow, a man of neither brains, heart or principle, who ultimately died of cut corn in his foot, that she now refused the offer of the man who afterward became the master of the world of Europe.

On what threads do our destinies hang! Had Madame Permon married Bonaparte, instead of refusing him, Napoleon would probably have settled down to a life of comparative ease and obscurity, and never would have become general, consul, emperor!

The double refusal of Madame Permon to ally her family to that of Bonaparte and to marry Napoleon herself, was destined to make the pupil of Saint-Cyr, Elisa Bonaparte, the Princess of Piombino, and to make the future General Bonaparte the husband of Josephine.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SIEGE OF VERDUN—ON THE MARCH—THE FORSAKEN—THE ARRIVAL OF THE VOLUNTEERS.

M. DE LOWENDAAL had made the utmost haste to shorten the distance to Verdun, and reaching it had gone at once to the courthouse. Two great interests, one pecuniary and one personal, had combined to carry him to the seat of war—to a town which might be taken at any moment. He must collect his money, and cautiously, for opposite Verdun was his tobacco farm; and he must now, on the eve of his marriage with Blanche de Laveline, rid himself of the tie which bound him to another woman.

This other woman was Mademoiselle Herminie de Beaurepaire, of good family (her brother was even now a general in the French army), and a girl of strong character and great personal attractions.

She had designed to enter a convent, but the baron had dazzled her, for the time being, with his wealth and his knowledge of the world (the young lady had lived all her life in the country, and almost in solitude), and she *had* forgotten the vows of celibacy. She had yielded to the baron, who had soon wearied of his conquest, especially since his mistress had presented him with a pledge of their affection.

His money and his mistress pressed their heavy claims upon the baron. He attended to the money first.

He found that the finances of Verdun were in such a chaotic state that he could collect nothing. "But," said his lawyer, who was likewise one of the magistrates of the town, "there is one chance, Monsieur le Baron, for you to get your money."

"Name it," said the baron quickly.

"If we have no money the King of Austria has," answered the traitorous magistrate; "and if he could get possession of this town——"

He did not finish this sentence, but the baron understood him. It was treason to France, but the baron was a financier, and all financiers are cosmopolitan. Money has no country. The baron's pockets had no patriotism. He really didn't care a sou whether his money came from France or Austria, so he got it. He felt no indignation whatever when he then heard a magistrate suggest to him the betrayal of the town to the enemy. Was it possible? and would it pay? was all he asked. Having answered these questions in the affirmative, he agreed, with the traitor magistrate, to betray the town, using his factotum Leonard to do the dirty work. This being arranged, the two conspirators against the people, the baron and the magistrate, separated, one to send Leonard to spread alarming reports among the citizens, the other to cement and strengthen secret adhesions to his contemplated treason.

Meanwhile, on their way to Verdun, the volunteers of Mayenne-et-Loire, were happy. They were accompanied by a detachment of the Thirteenth Light Infantry, in which regiment Lefebvre served as lieutenant with captain's orders. The volunteers sang, as they marched to the music of the Carmagnole, some innocent and lively lay, like "La Gamelle."

"My friends, say can you tell me,
Why blithe and gay are we?
Because the meal tastes best
When eaten with a jest.
We mess together always,
Long live the sound!
We mess together always,
Long live the cauldron's sound!"

The refrain was carried along the entire line and then the rear-guard answered with the words:

"There's naught of pride or coldness here,
'Tis only friendship makes high cheer.
Yes, without fraternity,
There never can be gayety.
Let us mess together, lads,
Long live the sound!
Let us mess together, lads,
Long live the cauldron's sound!"

But General Beaurepaire was alert and watchful.

The Prussians were not far away—there might be ambuscades.

Time wore on and the volunteers began to prepare for their meal; they lit fires and cooked soup; it was a blithely busy period. Some went for wood, others brought water from a spring that gurgled near, some stole peas from the fields, while others again cooked them, and they all sang in chorus:

"Ah! Many a crownèd head, to-day,
Is dying, famished far away,
And envies the way
Of the soldier gay
Who dines at our mess to-day.
Long live the cauldron's sound!"

A wagon was drawn up near the cauldron and the cooks. The old gray horse belonging to it was unharnessed and browsed at his ease. On the wagon was inscribed:

13 Light.
Mme. Catherine Lefebvre,
Cantinière.

Near the wagon and horse a child was playing, rolling about on the grass. Every now and then the boy would rush to Catherine, who would kiss him, or pat him, and then attend to business.

The troopers wanted her to open the canteen. She did so.

The preparations were simple but sufficient.

Assisted by a soldier, she arranged a long plank on two trestles as a table, and then she quickly, neatly placed upon it jugs, pitchers and a little keg.

Shop was opened, business was ready, the canteen was mounted; there were plenty of customers. The soldiers crowded around eagerly—they were all as merry as they were thirsty. The long dusty march and the jolly songs had made them alike dry and gay.

Glasses were filled and they drank to the success of the battalion of Mayenne-et-Loire, to the triumph of liberty, to the deliverance of Verdun.

Among the crowd of soldiers were Marcel and Renée, devoted to each other, yet guarding their mutual secret. It was hard to have to thus restrain their ardor. But they contrived to do so, and were not suspected.

General Beaurepaire mingled with his soldiers. Meeting Lefebvre and Catherine, near the canteen, the conversation became animated. Finally Bonaparte's name was casually mentioned by Lefebvre. Beaurepaire had met, and taken a liking to Bonaparte, and now asked after him, and Lefebvre and Catherine together gave their commander the latest particulars concerning their mutual friend, and then Marcel joined the group with still more recent news of the man they talked about.

"It is true," said Marcel, "that Captain Bonaparte is well and safe now with his family at Marseilles, but he has been in the greatest danger."

"Ah, tell me all about it," said the general.

"Pardon me, commander," suggested Lefebvre, "but we would all listen to Marcel's story with more gusto if we were all seated comfortably and were drinking something. My wife will serve it to us."

"A good idea, Lefebvre," said Beaurepaire. They all sat down by the canteen.

"A toast, my comrades!" cried Beaurepaire, when the glasses were filled. "Here's to the health of Madame Lefebvre, the pretty cantinière of the Thirteenth."

They clicked glasses. Catherine smiled. Then Lefebvre said to her with a wink: "Come, listen to Marcel here; he is going to tell us something more new and interesting about your great friend Captain Bonaparte."

"Are you getting jealous of Captain Bonaparte again?" laughed Catherine. "It is rather late in the day for that. But has anything dreadful really happened to him?" she asked, turning to Marcel.

"He has escaped death by a miracle," was the reply.

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Catherine. "Oh, tell us all about it, with our commander's permission."

The ex-laundress sat her ample person on the trunk of a tree, all attention, pricking her ears, and with parted lips waiting for the very latest particulars of news concerning her former customer.

According to Marcel's account, the Corsicans, hostile to revolution, had attempted to yield their island and themselves to the English. Paoli himself, the former patriot, had negotiated with the British government, and had endeavored to enlist Bonaparte on his side. But Bonaparte had indignantly refused, whereupon Paoli openly endeavored to destroy him.

His family—mother, brethren and sisters—had been compelled to flee; their house had been burned down in the night.

Napoleon's mother, in person, led the fugitive band.

They avoided the highroads, they sought thickets, they traveled by night, they endured all manner of hardships. Their clothes were torn by stones and brambles; they could not sleep—they were desolate, desperate, despairing. Suddenly they saw Napoleon—he had come for them in a French ship. It was waiting for them in the harbor. Wearied as they were, this joyful intelligence gave them strength to run toward the vessel, when suddenly a troop of their pursuers saw them and fired, aiming chiefly at Napoleon, who now led the band.

Several shots almost touched him, but he heeded not. The Bonaparte family reached the ship uninjured; but as soon as his family were all aboard, Bonaparte turned the only gun the vessel possessed against his enemies, and in one volley killed ten of them on the spot.

Whereupon the rest fled, and Napoleon and his family were saved.

"Brave Bonaparte!" cried Catherine, clapping her hands. "Those dastardly Corsicans. Oh, if only," she added, "our men of the Thirteenth had been there with you, Lefebvre."

"No, Bonaparte was enough," said Lefebvre; "he's a fine cannoneer."

"And," cried Beaurepaire, "a true Frenchman; "but he was not born to die on a little island like Corsica, this Bonaparte. It would have been too absurd; his destiny's too great for that. Thanks for your story," he said to Marcel, rising; "I shall write to Bonaparte and congratulate him when we have taken Verdun." He gave the order to resume the march.

The men having eaten their soup and drank their wine, now cleaned their muskets and formed again in column.

Beaurepaire made a sign to Catherine; he gave her some instructions which were peculiar and involved some danger.

"You will oblige me," he said, "but do not hesitate to refuse the task if you do not care to undertake it."

"I do *not* refuse, commander," replied Catherine; "I will put on my citizen dress, and I hope you will be satisfied with me."

"I know I shall be," said the commander.

Lefebvre wondered what on earth his commander was talking secretly to his wife about, but she did not enlighten him. "François," she said, "I shall see you at Verdun, by the commander's orders. Take care of the horse—see that La Violette," such was the poetic name of the prosaic young soldier who was detailed to take care of the canteen, "holds on to him by the bridle, going down hill."

"All right," said Lefebvre. He was satisfied that there was no use in asking his wife to tell him what she was about, so he plied her with no idle questions, only he warned her to be prudent, and reminded her of the possibility that she might be taken prisoner by the Prussians.

"You wretch! you prophet of evil!" she cried gayly, "have you forgotten that I have my watch-dogs under my blouse."

She alluded to the two pistols which she always carried under her skirt, in the belt where she carried her money.

Kissing her husband she departed toward Verdun, and as she trudged along she heard the song of the volunteers:

"Ah! ça ira! ça ira! ça ira!
Little and big we, all soldiers at heart!
Ah! ça ira! ça ira! ça ira!
And during the battle let no one betray—
Ah! ça ira! ça ira! ça ira!"

And the echo of the valley repeated, "Ça ira! ça ira!" responding to the martial note of the brave soldiers going forth to conquer for their country, and singing under the sacred standard of Liberty.

Herminie de Beaurepaire lived in a wing of the great house of Blécourt at Verdun, which had been transformed into an oratory, under the direction of her bigot of an aunt, Madame de Blécourt.

Two crucifixes and a small altar, on which stood images of the Virgin holding the infant Jesus in robes of blue and gold; candelabra and vases of flowers, decorated and marked the room, which after the suppression of the religious houses had been turned into a temporary chapel.

Mademoiselle was praying in the chamber, when suddenly, unannounced, the Baron de Lowendaal appeared upon the threshold. The girl gave a cry of surprise, arose, advanced toward him, then paused, waiting for some sign from him—some sign from his heart.

But the baron stood cold and silent; he had no heart.

"Ah, monsieur, you have come at last," cried the girl.

"Yes," he said gruffly; "and how is the—the child?"

"Your daughter," said the girl; "she is growing; she is nearly three years old. Oh, would to God she never had been born—" Here her tears checked her utterance.

This annoyed the baron—women's tears annoy most men. "Do not cry," he said, "your weeping may attract attention; all the house already doubtless is talking of my coming. Do not let them know what it is our interest to hide," and then he rushed *in medias res*. Without further preface he told the girl what he had come to tell her—that he no longer loved her, that he wanted to be rid of her.

Even the toughest of men find this sort of communication troublesome, and the baron made a botch of it; but his task was greatly simplified by the girl herself. She was proud despite her position, and she had ceased to love him, as he had ceased to love her, but with far more reason.

She had awakened from her dream, had discovered his real character, and despised him.

"The past is dead within me," she said to him bitterly. "In looking over my life now I find only cinders and ruin, but I have a child—your daughter Alice—for her I must live, for her I must keep up appearances."

"Quite right," approved the baron; "we must preserve appearances, even if we cannot preserve our love. It was an intoxication," he added, "but we are sober now; one cannot always be mad or drunk."

"I am sobered now truly," said the girl; "I love you no longer, but for our child's sake I demand that you fulfill your promise. You must make me your wife even though you leave me at the altar. Have you come to marry me, monsieur?"

"The devil! now it's out," thought the baron. "Your question staggers me," he replied aloud; "your demand embarrasses me. I remember that in a moment of delirium I promised you what it would be madness now to fulfill; but I pray you to remember also, that I shall ever hold you in the most respectful esteem."

"So you refuse," said she.

"No, I merely ask for more time," said he.

"You have had three years and more," she insisted.

"Give me then a few months longer," he suggested. "But really," he continued, "to tell the truth, I came to Verdun chiefly on matters of business—my head is full of pecuniary details—it is a poor time to talk of marriage. Wait till peace is declared, till I can settle my affairs; it will not be long before things will be quieted down."

"Ah, indeed," cried Herminie de Beaurepaire; "you think that the defense of Verdun is impossible. You calculate that artisans, villagers, blacksmiths, shoemakers—in short, the people, will not be able to successfully resist a king and an emperor. You insult brave men who fight like heroes to rid themselves of tyrants and imbeciles."

"I insult no one," answered the baron smoothly; "but I certainly consider that this town has no garrison."

"Ah! but it will have one very soon," she murmured.

"What's that you said?" asked the baron, astonished.

"Look and listen for yourself," cried the young girl.

A confused noise was heard, cheers, cries, shouts, the beating of drums, the tramping of feet.

The Baron de Lowendaal grew pale.

"What is this tumult?" he asked. "Some new uprising? The inhabitants of this town, not being fools, insist, I presume, on having the gates opened; they will not endure the horrors of a siege, *n'est ce pas?*"

"Not so, Monsieur Baron; the noise you hear, the confusion you see, springs from an entirely opposite cause, as you will be made to understand shortly," said the lady. "But let me ask you, and for the last time, will you keep your promise? Will you give my child, your child, *our* child, our daughter Alice, the fortune, the name, the rank, which are her due?"

"I have already told you, madame," replied the man impatiently, yet almost timidly, "that just now I will not, because I cannot. Listen to me, and be reasonable."

(He asked a woman to be "reasonable!") "I am here to attend to important business matters" (the woman made an indignant gesture). "The devil!" said the man, losing his temper, "you must wait till peace is established and the rebels are punished. When his majesty returns, not to the Tuileries, which could easily be captured by the mob, but to

Versailles, then, my dear madame, I will consider—I will decide."

"Take care, monsieur!" cried the woman, "I am one who will avenge myself on the man who trifles with me and plays me false."

"Threats," sneered the baron; "well, I like it better so. A woman's threats are less dangerous than her tears."

"I repeat once more, monsieur, take care. I am not so weak, so lonely, so uninfluential, as you seem to think."

"And I tell you once again, madame, that I am not so easily frightened as you seem to imagine."

"Do you not hear that noise, monsieur? It is coming this way."

"Yes, I hear it, madame; can the Prussians have taken the town already?"

"They are not Prussians, monsieur; they are patriots."

"The devil!" ejaculated the baron; "French reinforcements! Can it be? Lafayette is with the Austrians, Dumouriez is in camp, Dillon is bought by the allies. Whence then these reinforcements?"

"Your very natural anxiety shall be gratified," said the lady with a meaning look. And advancing to the door of the oratory, or temporary chapel, she admitted a plump, pretty woman, who, accompanied by two little children, had been in waiting for some time. "Come in, madame," cried Mdlle. Herminie, "and let the Baron de Lowendaal know whose hands beat the drums that have awakened this town."

The plump, pretty young woman entered the oratory and gave a military salute. And then addressing the baron, looking him full in the face, she said: "I am Catherine Lefebvre, canteen-bearer to the Thirteenth Infantry, at your service. You want to know the news? It is the battalion of Mayenne-et-

Loire, which is making its entry into Verdun, accompanied by a company of the Thirteenth, under the command of Captain François Lefebvre, my husband. Ah, monsieur, mademoiselle, it will be a fine surprise for the world."

"Yes," said Mademoiselle Herminie, and looking at the baron she continued: "These troops are under the command of General Beaurepaire, my brother."

"Your brother!" echoed the baron, now seriously alarmed.

"Yes, monsieur, my brave brother, who, prior to his entry here, sent this brave woman to let me know privately, and to reassure me."

The baron looked as he felt, astounded, and not in the least cheerful.

Madame Sans-Gêne went up to him, and patted him on the shoulder, as though she had known him all his life—as though he were not a rich man and a baron. "One would almost be tempted to imagine, my little man," she said, "that this news disconcerted you. Oh, you cannot be a patriot, so be careful. As for the aristocrats who talked of surrendering the town to the Germans, they had better keep out of the way of the soldiers; there are five hundred of us."

"Only five hundred," thought the baron, and he grew calmer. "There are too few of them to do much harm. The worst feature is the presence of this Beaurepaire; we must get rid of him."

Meantime Mademoiselle Herminie had brought in one of the two little children—a blonde girl with thin legs, who tottered and trembled. Leading this child to the baron she said: "She is your daughter, monsieur; will you not kiss her?"

Lowendaal scowled, then turning, like one who is expected to do something disagreeable, he kissed the child coldly on the forehead, as one would kiss a corpse. It was the corpse of love.

The child was afraid and began to cry—no wonder. Suddenly a little handsome lad, wearing a liberty cap and a cockade, rushed in and put his arms around the weeping girl, who began to smile.

"Don't cry," said the boy, "let's go and play, Alice. Let's make believe we are shooting the Prussians. It is such fun."

Catherine Lefebvre looked and listened proudly to the boy. "That's my little Henriot," she told the baron confidentially; "he will be a sergeant some day. I am bringing him up as a defender of the Republic—till I have one of my own."

"Your brother," said the baron abruptly, turning to Mdlle. Herminie, "does he know?"

"All," replied the lady. "It was a terrible confession for a sister to make, but I made it, and he forgave me. He has hastened, as you see, to protect me."

The roll of the drums sounded louder, and came nearer. The town seemed as full of noise as joy. The banks of the Meuse were lively with song and greeting.

"I must go to the courthouse," said the baron, eager to terminate the interview with the woman he had loved and left.

"And I must go and meet my husband," said Catherine. "Come, march, you young recruit!" she cried to little Henriot.

The lad resisted slightly; he seized the little girl's skirts and clung to them, as if loath to let her go.

"See the young dandy," said Catherine with a laugh. "He already attaches himself to the ladies—a promising boy. But come on, young man," she cried, pulling him along. "Let us thrash the Prussians first, and then you shall see your girl again."

"Madame," said mademoiselle, much moved, taking Catherine's hand, "I shall never forget you and your kindness; thank my brother for sending you to me. As for my daughter here, who smiles upon your little Henriot, as if she wanted him to stay, promise me that if aught befalls me, you will, should opportunity offer, guard my child."

"Count on me," said our Catherine, in a tone and with a look that showed she could be counted on. "If I had another child to look after I could afford to wait still longer for my own," she added, laughing. "But really, mademoiselle, it must be *au revoir* now indeed; my husband will be waiting for me." And with a kiss and embrace the women parted; Catherine, ere she vanished, making a *moue* at the baron.

As for Lowendaal, he walked in a rage toward the courthouse. "That Beaurepaire," he said to himself, "may force me to marry his sister. Ah! into what a wasp's nest I have flung myself," and utterly dissatisfied with the turn of affairs, the baron went to the courthouse to meet the notabilities there assembled, among whom were several traitors whose names should be pilloried by posterity.

CHAPTER XIV.

BRUNSWICK'S MESSENGER—BEAUREPAIRE'S OATH—LEONARD'S MISSION—THE EMIGRANT'S CAMP.

In the great hall of the courthouse of Verdun, by the light of torches, were assembled the members of the districts and the great men of the place.

The Duke of Brunswick had encamped before the gates of the city. Should those gates be opened to him? or should they be kept closed, and the town stand a siege? Such was the weighty matter awaiting instant decision.

"Messieurs," said Attorney-general Gossin, "my heart bleeds at the bare idea of the horrors which would result to Verdun from a siege. Resistance by weakness (such as ours at this moment) to strength (such as the Duke of Brunswick can command) is madness. Will you not receive, in a friendly spirit, a gentleman who comes here with a conciliatory message—a messenger from the Duke of Brunswick?"

President Ternaux looked around the assembly, evidently seeking its sanction.

"Yes, we will," was the response.

The messenger from the duke was then admitted. He was a young man in citizen's dress, pale, and carrying his arm in a sling.

He was introduced by the president to the assembly, with these words:

"This is Monsieur the Count de Neipperg, aid-de-camp of General Clerfayt, general-in-chief of the Austrian army, and representative of his grace the Duke of Brunswick.

Yes, Brunswick's messenger on this occasion was the young Austrian whose life Catherine Sans-Gêne had saved in Paris. Recovering under Catherine's care, he had sought active service to distract his thoughts.

He now politely but firmly, and speaking excellent French, made known the conditions of the Austrians. The town must be surrendered within twenty-four hours, or Verdun would be bombarded, and when taken there would be "no quarter."

Absolute silence followed the statement of these terms.

Nine-tenths of the assembly, whose members were mostly mercantile, had at once resolved to surrender the town, but no man wished to be the first to say so.

Neipperg, looking about him, understood the position of affairs, and despised the men around him for their cowardice.

Within himself he thought: "Surely these are not kin to the Frenchmen with whom I fought in Paris." Like the true soldier he was, he regarded far more respectfully the brave Frenchmen who had wounded, and nearly killed him, than these craven cowards who trembled and kept still.

Finally Neipperg broke the silence he himself had caused. "You have heard, messieurs, the terms of the general of the Austrian army. What answer shall I take to the Duke of Brunswick?"

"Shall we force the duke to fire on this defenseless town?" cried the Baron Lowendaal.

Neipperg at once recognized the face and voice of his rival in love. His brow flushed, he advanced a step, he would fain then and there have addressed, insulted, and perhaps, weak as he was, assaulted his rival. "But," he reflected, "I am here as an ambassador; I must restrain myself," and he did so effectually.

"But," thought he likewise, "if the baron is here, may not Blanche be here also? I must wait and watch."

The baron repeated his question. "No," replied the assembly, "there shall be no bombardment. We agree to the duke's terms."

At this moment a fusilade sounded, drums were beaten, and under the very windows of the courthouse were heard voices singing the "ça ira."

Every one rose in wild bewilderment.

Some, calmer than the rest, looked out of the courtroom windows. They saw the town lighted, as though for a fete.

Torches burned in the market-place, and round the red light women and children danced fantastically.

It was the volunteers of Mayenne-et-Loire, who had caused this tumult, this uprising of the town.

The Baron de Lowendaal disappeared. Neipperg would fain have followed him, but his duty prevented.

And now General Beaurepaire, accompanied by Lefebvre, and surrounded by the volunteers and the soldiers of the Thirteenth, burst into the courtroom.

The president of the assembly protested against this intrusion, but Beaurepaire spoke: "It is reported that you are all plotting treason here, and talk of surrendering this city. Is it so?"

The president, feeling that he was supported by the sentiment of the assembly answered in return: "Go back with your men, General Beaurepaire, and stop this tumult. You have acted without authority from the council of defense."

"Messieurs," cried Beaurepaire, "I never wait for orders to fire on the enemy. I have therefore fired on the Prussians and barricaded the gates, without even thinking of the council of defense."

"You are in the wrong, general," said Bellamond, the director of artillery for Verdun.

"Comrade," replied the general, "that is my affair, for which I will answer to the people. So much for the present situation; as for the future act with me, and together we yet can repulse the enemy and save the town."

"He is a brave man," thought Neipperg, looking at Beaurepaire. "He atones for the others," and he addressed himself to Beaurepaire, delivering to him the message from the Duke of Brunswick, of which the French general made short work. "Your proposition is declined," he said; "permit me to conduct you personally to our outposts, and to send you back to those who sent you."

"I am at your command, general," said the Count de Neipperg.

"Messieurs," cried Beaurepaire, addressing in his loudest, firmest tones, the agitated assembly, "I have sworn to defend Verdun to the death, and I will keep my vow." Then he left the court-room, followed by Neipperg.

Lowendaal at this moment returned to the court-room, and when told of Beaurepaire's oath, ridiculed it, and expressed the hope that at least the man who took the oath might die.

"But let him not interfere with the purpose of this assembly," continued the baron. "Let us surrender the town rather than endure the fruitless horrors of a siege. Was it not so agreed?"

"It was, it is," answered the president; "but," looking around and not seeing De Neipperg, "the duke's messenger has gone. What shall we do? he may not return, and yet he has the papers."

"Let us send some trusty messenger to the Austrian camp, carrying your duplicate, with the official assurance that to-morrow the town gates shall be opened to the Austrians," suggested the baron.

"The very thing," said the president eagerly; "but whom can we entrust with our message?"

"Trust it with me," said the baron.

"With you! ah, you will save us!" cried the president with joy. And he embraced the baron as though the latter, instead of being a pusillanimous, mercenary traitor, was a herald announcing a patriotic triumph.

Some moments later the baron, with the duplicate letter of capitulation, left the courthouse and joined his factotum Leonard, who was in waiting.

The baron, in a low voice, gave Leonard some instructions.

Leonard, submissive as he was, yet on this occasion seemed loath to obey the instructions given him. Whereupon the baron reminded him that he—the baron—could send him—Leonard—to the galleys.

It was even so. Years ago the baron had caught Leonard in the act of committing forgery—a crime then punishable with galley-slavery at Toulon—and though he had shielded him, for his own purposes, he could at any moment make the charge against him, and secure his punishment. This reminder brought the servitor to his senses, and he promised strict obedience to his master's orders. The two then talked over details, and Leonard was dispatched about his business.

He had been instructed to do various things, in quick succession, but two points perplexed him most of all.

"How am I to enter the house of Madame de Blécourt without being suspected?" he asked himself, in sore distress of mind. "And how am I to reach General Beaurepaire, at the dead of night, unarmed and alone?"

As for the baron, he was not at all perplexed. He felt sure that Leonard would, at all hazards, do what he had been told. "He is to give me, while I go to the emigrant's camp, outside the town, a signal of his success. I shall soon see that signal," the baron smiled. As for scruples he had none; besides it was Leonard who was to commit the crimes.

"The emigrant's camp," so-called, was a collection of royalist Frenchmen, who had assembled to fight against the nation, and for the restoration of the monarchy. They, to a certain extent, affiliated with the Austrians and Prussians, all being alike hostile to the Republic.

Lowendaal secretly visited this camp that night, and while waiting there met face to face with the Count de Neipperg.

The rivals and enemies scowled, but saluted each other with ceremonious politeness, like two duelists, who bow low before trying to lay each other low forever.

Lowendaal had ostensibly visited the emigrant's camp to bring news of the intended surrender of the town, and on this account he was received in person by the commander of the camp.

While the baron talked with the commander, he kept his eyes turned in a certain direction. Suddenly he saw, in the town of Verdun, a peculiar light as of a fire. It was the agreed-upon signal; Leonard had done his work. Yes, there could be no mistake—the fire was in the northern portion of the town, a part which had as yet been spared by the besieging forces; there could be no mistake, and Beaurepaire was dead—that was what the signal signified. The baron smiled cruelly, triumphantly—the great obstacle in his path had been removed—the only man he really dreaded had been obliterated. He could afford to smile.

His main purpose in his visit to the emigrant camp had been accomplished. He had seen the signal, and now knew what to do. He cut the interview with the Austrian general as short as he decently could, assured the general of the absolute certainty that Verdun would capitulate, hinted mysteriously that the great barrier to capitulation, General Beaurepaire had been removed, and then returned to Verdun.

The Count de Neipperg had been present during this interview, and showed as openly as he dared his contempt for the baron, who, thick as his hide was, winced beneath his withering looks.

And when the baron had departed, De Neipperg openly expressed his suspicions, from the baron's positive knowledge of Beaurepaire's "removal," that Beaurepaire had met with foul play, with the baron either a principal or an accessory to the deed.

"At any rate," said the commander of the emigrant camp, "I shall continue our fire on the ramparts of Verdun until we see raised there the flag of truce."

CHAPTER XV.

CATHERINE'S NIGHT ALARM—A HERO'S END.

Leonard had left his master, the baron, perplexed and discomfited, as we have seen. He made his way as best he could to the Porte de France. The cannon roared on that side of the town, and Leonard was a coward as well as a scoundrel. But even scoundrels are brave when desperate. He was now seeking a soldier—he was on the hunt, by the baron's orders, for General Beaurepaire, and so he must perforce go among the fighters.

Near the gate Leonard saw a crowd of men gathered around a table. Here at least there was no fighting going on, only eating and drinking. Leonard did not therefore hesitate to approach.

Bread, sausages, bottles and glasses were spread on a rude board table. It was the canteen of the Thirteenth Light, tended by the fair Catherine herself, in person. She was as usual lively, smart, jolly, shrewd, wide-awake.

Near the table was her wagon, and in the wagon slept the little Henriot. Catherine ever and anon glanced toward the little fellow fondly. "The cannon lulls him as though it were a cradle-song," she said to herself. And then turning to a soldier, she loudly execrated the Prussians.

During the siege Beaurepaire had been at every point where there was danger, and Catherine had followed Beaurepaire.

Like a war-goddess she shamed the laggards, she encouraged the courageous, she helped the wounded, she fired guns, she prevented panics, she was invaluable; she was, without thinking of heroism, a heroine.

Beaurepaire noticed her, and praised her; while as for her husband, he almost worshiped her.

It was her baptism of fire.

But now she had returned to the canteen.

Leonard approached her. Catherine looked at him; she did not like his looks. He asked her where he could find General Beaurepaire.

"You are in civilian's dress," answered Catherine; "you are not a soldier. What do you want to see the general about."

"That's my business," replied Leonard, half smiling, half scowling, "but I must see him."

"You choose a bad time," said Catherine, shrugging her shoulders.

"I choose what time I can get," was the reply. "I have some important news for the general."

"Possibly," said Catherine, "but I don't think you will be able to see him to-night."

"Possibly, but I will try," retorted Leonard, and he walked away.

Catherine did not like this. She scented mystery and danger for Beaurepaire, perhaps. She had no proof of anything wrong, but she believed in her own intuitions. She had reason to do so. She determined to tell her husband about this civilian stranger who was anxious to see Beaurepaire. But her husband just then was nowhere to be found. Husbands never are to be found when wanted.

And suddenly she recollected having seen this man's, this strange civilian's face before. Yes, she was certain of it. She racked her brain to remember when and where.

"Ah, I have it at last," she cried to herself, "I recall him now. I have seen him with the Baron Lowendaal, but I am sure that the baron is a traitor and a rascal. Probably this other man is no better.

Why should he be so anxious to see Beaurepaire? There is some underhanded business going on, but I shall find it out, or my name is not Catherine Sans-Gêne."

The more she thought about the matter, the more convinced and the more anxious she became. At last she could endure the suspense no longer, and when as night advanced, her customers became few, she sent away the few that were left, under the plea that she was weary and must sleep.

"Amuse yourselves," she said to those she thus dismissed, "on the ramparts. You will find a few men there still, trying to place gabions and set guns."

And then, after kissing the sleeping Henriot, and neatly arranging her canteen, she sallied forth into the dark streets. Her instinct led her first toward the house of Madame de Blécourt, where Beaurepaire's sister resided and where the general slept.

There, if anywhere, danger threatened Beaurepaire. She hastened along sadly, she divined coming sorrow, she scented crime and treason.

Suddenly, as she approached the Blécourt house, she heard a shot.

It was not a surprising noise in a city that was besieged, but in this lonely quarter, far from the ramparts, it was simply frightful.

It meant murder. She saw the shadow of a man running away. She fancied, nay, she was sure it was the shadow of the man in civilian's dress, whom she had disliked and distrusted so.

Should she pursue him? No! On to the Blécourt house! See if Beaurepaire is safe.

"Oh, God! what does this mean?" cried Catherine, as she neared the Blécourt mansion.

People were calling out for help. Some one shouted "Fire!"

Fire indeed it was. A red light shot forth. The Blécourt residence was in flames.

The old dowager aunt of Mlle. Herminie, her bigot aunt, Madame de Blécourt, appeared upon the balcony of her house, waving her withered arms wildly. Clouds of dense black smoke formed around the open windows, great tongues of flame seemed to lick the roof. The servants of the establishment lost their heads, and ran about distracted, doing nothing. Finally they all ran away.

Meanwhile the courageous Catherine, intent on saving human life, rushed into the burning house, mounted the already flaming stairs, and entered the first room she found with its door open. She was prepared to drag its inmate forth.

"Is any one asleep here?" she cried. "Come, save yourself and quickly. Can I aid you?"

No answer came from the room, and the smoke prevented her from entering in.

Suddenly a glare of darting flame illuminated the apartment through the smoke.

Catherine peered within the chamber; then despite her bravery she gave a shriek.

It was a shriek more of horror than of terror. For she had seen by the glare of the flames a man motionless upon the bed, and that man was General Beaurepaire.

Danger was all around him, yet there he lay stretched, still as the dead.

Catherine rushed into the room and reached the bed, though she could scarcely breathe for the smoke. The glare, too, of the light had now died away. She was in the dark, she could but grope with her hands, she might never herself leave this room alive.

But she heeded not; she found her way with her hands. "The general must have fainted," she thought.

Ah! she was at his side at last. She touched him, but he moved not, there was not even any sound of breathing.

"What a sleep to be sure," she thought, "and at such a time." Her very blood froze with terror as an idea suggested itself.

"My God! it is true," she cried in agony, as she laid her ear upon the general's breast. "His heart has ceased to beat—he is dead."

She laid her hand upon his forehead. Once more she shrieked, for she felt blood; her fingers were thick with it; they stuck together with it.

She recoiled, she felt stunned, she was taken sick. "Ah, the smoke is killing me." She rushed to the window, opened it and revived. "But it was not the smoke that killed *him*," she thought, looking at the dead general on the bed; "no, he was dead when the fire began. He has been murdered, and then the house was fired to hide the crime, and that baron and that man were concerned in his murder, I will swear it. But he shall be avenged, I swear that, too."

She rushed from the room and heard a woman singing a cradle song. She could not believe it—a woman singing a child's ditty while the house was burning. But so it was; the voice came from the story above, and Catherine climbed in the direction of the voice.

She found Mlle. Herminie de Beaurepaire holding her sleeping daughter on her lap, and chanting a lullaby which was a death-song.

A glance at the young girl's calm manner but wild eye convinced Catherine that the lady had gone mad from trouble. Catherine had now to deal with a maniac. The brother killed, the sister crazy.

There was no time for words. Silently, swiftly, Catherine led the mother down the stairs, and carried the child. As the mad woman passed the still open door of the room where the general was lying dead, she shrieked: "That man with the pistol, he shot him in the temple, he will kill me," and she fell at the doorway.

Catherine could not move or carry her. She rushed downstairs into the street with the child, handed her to the soldiers who, now understanding the situation, were doing what they could. And then returning with assistance, she carried down the mad woman and her dead brother.

The crazed girl would have it that this was her wedding-day, and that the burning house was a huge candle lighted for the nuptial ceremony.

Madame de Blécourt broke her leg in jumping from the balcony to the street, and died a few days after. The mad girl was taken care of by a relative. Beaurepaire was said to have committed suicide to avoid surrender, and was buried with great honors. But the town of Verdun was surrendered to the Prussians, thanks to the Baron Lowendaal.

* * *

But the French garrison of Verdun had been allowed the honors of war. They went out with flags flying, and their arms in their hands. Lefebvre, now captain, was sent north with the Thirteenth Infantry; his wife went with him with her canteen, and little Alice, now practically motherless, was taken along, with little Henriot, under Catherine's care.

"Now, dear heart," she used to say to her husband, "we have two children whom our country has sent us, we who have none of our own."

Lefebvre would then express his determination to rectify this matrimonial error, and supply this want, and then they would kiss like lovers.

The volunteers marched out of Verdun with anger in their eyes, but with hope in their hearts, vowing to retake the town, and to drive out, at the bayonet's point, the Austrians and the Prussians, who would never have entered the place had it not been for the traitors of Verdun.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE EDGE OF THE UNKNOWN—NAPOLEON BONAPARTE'S ATTEMPT AT SUICIDE AND WHY IT FAILED —HIS SECOND DEFEAT.

While the events we have narrated were transpiring in the east, and while elsewhere Dumouriez and Kellermann saved France and the republic, what had become of Bonaparte?

He, as already told in Marcel's narrative, had secured the departure of his family from Corsica. He had brought them with him to Marseilles, but he and they were penniless.

It is needless to relate in detail the sufferings of a moneyless family in a strange city. The Bonapartes wandered from lodging to lodging, in the humblest quarters of the town, and were on several occasions turned out into the streets for non-payment of rent.

Landlords are pitiless. Keepers of furnished rooms are seldom furnished with a heart.

But Madame Mère, the real head of the Bonaparte family at this period, was not a woman of the ordinary stamp. She was possessed of an energy as great as that of her illustrious son, and a will-power which generally impressed all who met her. It was from her, his mother, that Bonaparte derived all his industry, all his daring, all his determination, and he always acknowledged his obligation.

Madame never allowed herself, under the most pressing circumstances, to become disheartened. She ever hoped for the future, and endeavored to justify that hope.

As soon as she was driven from one shelter she secured another, till at last she found a sure, safe, steady haven of rest for her weary family. She attracted the favorable notice of a Monsieur Clary, a well-to-do soap merchant of Marseilles, who, taking pity on her, gave her two rooms in the upper part of his house, at a reduced rental.

He would have allowed Madame Bonaparte to have lived rent free, but she was not an object of charity yet. She took in sewing from the neighbors, and aided by her daughters' needlework managed to subsist and pay her room-rent.

The family rose at dawn, and the mother and daughters did all their own housework, saw to the marketing, kept things in order. None were allowed to play, except the youngest—a child of ten.

Joseph Bonaparte was lucky enough to receive a government position as a military commissioner, but the pay was woefully small, much lighter than the work. The rest of "the Bonaparte boys" did nothing—they had nothing to do. Napoleon himself was mustered out of active service, and lost his scanty pay.

Ere long, despite the mother's pride, and the daughters' needlework, the family were reduced to absolute penury, and were obliged for the first time in their lives to eat the bitter bread of charity.

As Corsican refugees, victims to their devotion to France, the Bonapartes were legally entitled to rations of bread from the town, and though for several months Madame Bonaparte would not even think of such a thing, she at last was obliged to avail herself of it. Tears came into the proud lady's eyes as she applied to the city authorities for her quantum of loaves, but there was no help for it, her needs were pressing.

Napoleon wept with her, but what could he do? At least he could get rid of himself. He need be no longer a drag upon his mother, a burden on his family. If he could not support them or himself, he could at least "shuffle off this mortal coil," and make an end of it. He resolved to do so.

All his life he was a fatalist, and if it was his fate to kill himself—well, it was *kismet*.

He had hoped for higher destinies, he had believed in his star; but if it was so arranged that he was to perish young, in his prime, by his own hand, why then he had only read his stars under a mistake—given his life-chart the wrong interpretation.

He had a sou in his pocket—his last sou; a beggar came along and solicited alms. Napoleon laughed bitterly, thinking how much more wretched and more in need of help he was than this beggar who asked him for what he was wanting himself, and then he gave the coin to the beggar and walked down, utterly penniless and hopeless, toward the sea.

It was a rocky coast, and one great rock projected far over the coast line, forming a sort of promontory. The Man of Destiny made his way with difficulty over the stones to this projection, and stood there awhile with folded arms—his favorite attitude—looking down upon the calm green sea beneath.

The waters seemed to call him. In a voice of their own, audible to him alone, they cried:

"Come down to us. For what have you to live longer on earth. You are useless to your country, to your family, to yourself. Your sword has been taken from you, and though your genius, God-given, cannot be thus taken, what good can it do you? You have lost all confidence in yourself, and no wonder. What reason have you for any self-belief? what have you to show for it? Your star ha set, or become forever hidden in the clouds; you are all alone in your absurd aspirations. You have really no one to sympathize with you, or understand you; you are a burden to the woman you love best—your mother. You have lived your life; it has been a failure; one plunge, die the death that all must die sooner or later, and have it over."

Yes, the waves were right. If he died to-day there would be one less mouth to feed to-morrow, one pensioner less upon the scanty and unwilling charity of the state.

And yet, even to a pauper and a pensioner, life is sweet. He hesitated; he stood debating with himself upon the verge of nothingness—on the edge of the unknown.

He saw a ship sailing along. "If that vessel approaches the land I shall keep on living; if on the contrary it goes further out to sea, I shall at once leap from this rock." So he arranged within himself, chancing his fate upon a passing sail.

He watched the ship; it was leaving the land. It was lessening in the distance. "I must do it," he said. He calculated the distance and the force of the spring necessary to clear the rock in his descent, when—"Bonaparte! Bonaparte!" he heard his own name called aloud.

He turned. A fisherman, or a man dressed in fishing garb, was running straight toward him with open arms.

He wondered what it all meant, but his first impulse was not to heed the interruption, but in some more secluded spot to kill himself.

But again the voice cried:

"Bonaparte! Napoleon Bonaparte!" and the man in fisher's garb came nearer and nearer, till reaching where he stood, the newcomer embraced him ere he was aware.

"Is it really you, my dear Napoleon?" said the voice. "What the devil are you doing here in this lonely spot, and looking like a man about to commit some desperate deed?"

Then seeing Bonaparte's absolute and utter astonishment the stranger cried: "Why, don't you know me? Have I changed so much? Don't you remember Desmazis, your old comrade? I served with you in the artillery regiment at La Fère. Surely you cannot have forgotten the jolly nights we had together at Valence?"

The look of wonder and displeasure left Bonaparte's face as he listened, and was replaced by recognition and genuine delight.

"What!" he said, "my dear old comrade, my true friend Desmazis, I am indeed as glad as I am surprised to see you here after all these years."

And then, in his turn, he embraced the stranger.

Explanations ensued; Desmazis gave his story first. He had emigrated at the beginning of the revolution, and lived in peace and plenty in Italy, along the shore near Savona, but he had recently received word that his old mother, residing near Marseilles, had been taken seriously ill. So he had donned an old suit of fisherman's clothes, that he might not attract any attention, and had come to France to see his mother.

He had found the old lady already convalescing, so having made her happy by his presence and presents, he was returning to his beloved Italy again, a happy man—and much the happier for having thus unexpectedly met his often-thought-of comrade, Bonaparte.

"But you?" he turned suddenly to his companion and looked at him keenly, "What were you doing, or about to do, at this lonely spot?"

Bonaparte, generally so self-poised and self-possessed, now stammered, hesitated, almost blushed, as though detected in a folly or a crime. And he looked unconsciously upon the sea below, whose waters seemed to call him still.

"Ah! you are unhappy, my dear Bonaparte," cried his old comrade. "What makes you suffer? What misfortune hangs over you? Tell your old friend. Why, man, you look as if you were thinking of taking your own life."

"You have guessed it," said Bonaparte, "or rather the instinct of your sympathetic soul has guided you aright. I was about to throw myself into the sea."

"*Ciel!* and what for, man?"

"For poverty. I have lost my position and my pay. I have no money and a large family. I have no bread and no hope."

"Poverty! only that?" shouted Desmazis, almost joyfully. "Only poverty? That's easily cured—I can cure it. Truly, I am in luck, and came in a good time. Take this," and he handed Napoleon a bag from under his belt; "here are ten thousand francs in gold. Don't hesitate, I say, I am rich—very rich—and I can spare them. Pshaw! take them as a loan if you will not have them as a gift. You can pay me back as soon as you like. Either take them, or drop them on the ground, or throw them into the sea, for I will not touch that bag again. Take it, *mon cher*, for your *family's* sake."

"For my family's sake, God bless you!" cried Napoleon, as he received the bag.

Then like the true gentleman and nature's nobleman that he was, Desmazis almost ran away from Bonaparte to escape his thanks. "*Au revoir!*" he cried, embracing the friend he had so materially aided, whose life he had really saved. "*Au revoir*, I must be off and away, my men are coming in my gig to take me to my ship; I am homeward bound.

Good luck to you, my dear Napoleon," and he disappeared, reached his ship, and set sail for his beloved Italy.

Bonaparte for awhile stood stunned. He allowed his preserver to depart without a word. What could he say? He could but *feel!* As if fascinated, he looked upon the bag of gold, realizing all it meant to him and his. To his excited soul it was as if that golden shower had fallen on him from the sky.

Then suddenly he started off on a run toward the town, and, like a whirlwind, entered the cheerless room where his mother and sisters sat hungry at their needlework.

He opened the bag before their dazzled eyes without a word, and spread the golden pieces on the deal table, chinking the money joyfully—how he enjoyed the sound. Then he found speech at last. "Mother," he cried, "we are rich. Girls, you shall have enough to eat—dinner every day, and you shall wear new gowns. See, what a windfall."

"What a godsend," said the mother gratefully. "But how came you by this gold, my Napoleon?"

And then he told them all.

The Bonapartes were happy.

In after years, when a great man, Napoleon caused a diligent search to be made for his benefactor. Desmazis was found in a little village in Provence, cultivating violets.

He at first pretended not to know Bonaparte, and to have forgotten all about the little incident of the bag of gold.

But Napoleon's memory was not so treacherous, and he insisted on showing his gratitude. He paid his money-debt with ample interest, giving Desmazis three hundred thousand francs for ten. His old comrade positively refused to be thus recklessly compensated, but the emperor would have his way. He absolutely threatened to make things unpleasant for his benefactor if he persisted in his refusal; so Desmazis yielded. But Napoleon was not even then content. As his former comrade was so fond of flowers, the emperor appointed him superintendent of the royal gardens at a liberal salary.

It was an episode creditable to all parties and to human nature.

Altogether independent of saving Napoleon from suicide, Desmazis' generosity advanced materially the interests of Napoleon's family. It aided his brother Joseph in forming a matrimonial alliance with Mlle. Julie, one of the daughters of Monsieur Clary, the wealthy soap merchant, who had befriended the Bonapartes and had almost given them their rooms.

And hereby hangs a tale.

Monsieur Clary had another daughter, a pretty girl called Désirée. Encouraged by the success of his brother Joseph with one sister, Napoleon courted the other.

He believed in matrimonial advancement, and Mlle. Désirée Clary was not only fair to look at, but, thanks to her father, well-to-do. The Clary family were likewise well-connected. It would be an advantageous marriage for Napoleon; that settled it for him.

But not for her. The young lady had the bad taste and the bad luck to refuse the future emperor of the French.

To tell the truth, she had no special faith in any particularly bright future for her suitor. He seemed to her but an ordinary young man, who was rather sterner and more gloomy than most young men.

It must be conceded as a mere matter of fact, that the man who conquered Europe never conquered women, until after he had become powerful and successful. As emperor he never made advances in vain, as witness the famous actress, Mlle. Mars; but on his unaided merits, while a young man, he could boast of few feminine victories. Defeated first in his designs on Madame Permon, he failed for the second time with Mlle. Clary.

And he seemed to feel his second defeat more acutely than he had his first. The refusal of the young girl seemed to rankle more than that of the mature widow. Being still a young man himself, perhaps this was but natural.

For a month or more, Napoleon persisted in his hopeless suit; he would not take "No" for an answer. He almost rendered himself obnoxious to the young lady by his insistence, and when at last he abandoned the attempt, he swore to make the girl repent her refusal.

And doubtless one of the reasons which later on led Napoleon to seek Josephine, the Widow Beauharnais, was his desire to show both the Widow Permon and Mlle. Désirée Clary that he could secure a woman superior in every respect to either of them.

And yet his very revenge upon Mlle. Clary contributed indirectly to her advancement. For, as Bonaparte ascended, he raised others with him, and thanks to his rise, the girl who rejected him—this daughter of a soap-maker—became the wife of one of Napoleon's companions-in-arms, married Bernadotte, and became thereby queen of Sweden.

Such then was the history of Napoleon up to the time when, in our true story, Lefebvre and Catherine, his wife, marched in the ranks of the army of the north toward the ever-memorable town of Jemmapes.

CHAPTER XVII.

JEMMAPES—THE NUPTIAL MASS—A "MARRIED AND SETTLED" WOMAN'S UNEXPECTED APPEARANCE AS A "BRIDE."

ROBESPIERRE once said: "War is absurd," but he added, "nevertheless, being human, man must go to war."

Such was the creed of the republicans. With them war was indeed "absurd;" they had no talented generals and no trained soldiers, no ammunition and no rations. They had no money, they had nothing which could warrant making an attack, nor did they have even the means for defense.

All their generals were royalists or traitors, Dumouriez, Dillon, Castine, Valence.

Dumouriez favored the young Duke de Chartres, afterward Louis-Philippe, but the young duke did not justify the predilection—at least not on the field of battle.

But the army of the republic, though composed of undisciplined volunteers, possessed what is more than discipline itself—patriotic enthusiasm. These volunteers sang the Marseillaise, the Carmagnole, and the *Ça-ira* tunes which beat time to their wild marches, and they could fight as well as sing.

It was at Jemmapes that the improvised infantry of the republic, commanded by Lefebvre and Hoche, then merely subordinate officers, began its victorious career of twenty years.

And on the eve of battle the chateau de Lowendaal (in the center of the district which separated the French from the Austrian army, protected from the French by wood and stream, and from the Austrians by a mountain range), was occupied by its owner, and his two guests of honor, the Marquis de Laveline and his daughter Blanche.

The baron, being now rid of General Beaurepaire and his sister Herminie (the former dead, the latter mad), and the child, Alice, having disappeared, felt free and light of heart, and was more determined than ever to marry the marquis' daughter.

True, Mlle. Blanche refused absolutely to see him, but he heeded not. He had the father in his power—not only his property, but his honor, his life.

For the Marquis de Laveline had been concerned in the infamous Diamond Necklace affair, in which Marie Antoinette, and the Chevalier de Rohan so conspicuously figured, and his part in this transaction (which would have alike in France and Austria forfeited his life, as well as ruined his reputation), was well known to the baron, who held it over the head of his guest as a menace.

It was arranged that the marriage was to take place at midnight, solemnized in the chateau by the baron's chaplain, but Blanche was more than ever resolved that this hated union should never be consecrated by mortal priest. But meanwhile where was Catherine and the child, her little Henriot?

Although the lady knew it not, Catherine then was near her, where the camp fires of the Thirteenth Light Infantry lighted up the woods around the chateau.

And that night the faithful and heroic Catherine resolved to call on Blanche de Laveline. Her determination made, she put her two pistols into her belt, saying nothing to her husband, who probably would have disapproved of her intention, and kissing the little Henriot, who lay fast asleep beside Alice, with his arm around her neck, she whispered softly to the sleeping boy: "My darling, I am going to your *other* mother," and was gone.

She was incurring great risk, but she thought not of herself, though to tell the truth she felt the least bit guilty at leaving her husband, though only for a few hours, without his knowledge and consent.

She advanced toward the woods, and there she saw, coming toward her, a tall, thin man. She took one of her pistols from her belt and stood ready to fire. "Who goes there?" she cried, loudly enough for the man to hear, but not loudly enough to be heard by the sentries.

"No enemy, but a friend—your friend, Madame Catherine," said the tall, thin man, whom she now recognized as La Violette.

This fellow was supposed to be half-witted. He was a butt for his companions, but Catherine rather liked him; he had tended faithfully her horse, and helped her with her canteen, but he bore the reputation of being afraid of powder and ball, in short, a coward.

Catherine, on seeing who it was, put back her pistol laughing. "Well, since it is you, I must not scare you," she said; "but why are you prowling about here, outside the lines; it is a dangerous time and place for a coward."

La Violette came closer to Catherine. "I will tell you why I am here now," said the tall, thin, young man, "I saw you, Madame Lefebvre, as you left the camp, and here I am."

"What! to play the spy upon me, La Violette?"

"Oh, no, but I thought you might be running into danger, Madame Lefebvre."

"Danger, and what then? Danger and you generally keep far apart, La Violette."

"Alas! yes, Madame Catherine, but I thought I would form its acquaintance to-night."

"Very good, La Violette, but why to-night?"

"Because I wanted to see you; I have something to say to you, madame. Oh, Catherine, do not send me back."

Madame Lefebvre was puzzled, the young fellow seemed desperately earnest in his desire to be with her, and yet what did he want? what could it be? And then he had never called her "Catherine"—Catherine without any prefix—before. What could he mean? She was not kept long in doubt.

"Oh, Madame Catherine," cried La Violette, "I love you."

Catherine started, uncertain whether to wax merry or grow indignant.

"Yes, I love you so," the tall, thin, young fellow repeated. "I should never have dared to tell you so in the daytime at the canteen, before the men; but here I am not a coward in the dark; night makes me brave."

As he spoke, and before Catherine could speak, two shots were heard; La Violette disappeared. "The brave man has fled," she said to herself.

But he had *not*. For in a moment more shooting was heard, and then she caught sight of a man fleeing—not La Violette; and then La Violette himself reappeared with a sword, stained with blood. "I have kept that 'Kaiserlick' (a term of reproach applied to the Austrians) from doing any more firing. I killed him, but the other one escaped me," said La Violette.

Catherine looked upon her new lover in a new light. He might be a fool, but he certainly was no coward. She and the rest had misjudged him; she was indeed surprised.

She had made up her mind to scold him roundly and then send him back to the camp, but she changed her mind. He might be useful, too. After all, two are safer than one.

"La Violette," she said sweetly, "I feel it my duty to warn you that I am now going where there is danger—great danger—and precisely *what* I do not know myself. Do you still wish to share my perils to-night?"

"I follow you though you go through fire," said La Violette.

"Then begin," laughed Catherine, "by going through *water*. We must cross this stream to get to where I am going—yonder chateau."

"That is where 'we' are going, is it?" said La Violette. "Lead on," he added, "I follow; I'll swim if need be."

"Oh, not quite so bad as that," laughed Catherine. "Now for it," she said, reaching the stream. "Close your lips, hold your head up, keep your eyes wide open—now."

The two crossed the stream, now almost a river (the Weme it is called), the water coming up to their knees.

Drying their feet on the other side, they advanced cautiously till they reached the door of the chateau stables.

Catherine felt along the walls for a place to climb over them. Finding a spot where the stone was crumbling, she signed to La Violette to help her climb.

"With pleasure," said her remarkable lover, "only too happy;" and he knelt down in the damp grass, on all fours.

"He is not dignified, but decidedly obliging," thought Madame Lefebvre, as she put her ample foot upon his back, and then rested the very considerable weight of her body on his as she leaped over.

A few minutes more and they were both in the chateau garden. Here they stepped along cautiously, hiding as much as possible among the trees, and approaching a room where lamps burned brightly.

The Baron de Lowendaal and the Marquis de Laveline had a last decisive interview, the baron had imposed his conditions. Blanche must marry him that very night, or in every way the marquis would be ruined.

But Blanche refused positively to wed the baron; she was in fact utterly astonished at the persistency of her most unwelcome suitor. Taking it for granted that the baron had received her letter, which she had entrusted to Leonard, she wondered how any man, with pretensions to being a gentleman, or even without such pretensions, could seek to unite himself with a woman who was already united in affection with another man, and of which mutual affection such a palpable pledge existed as little Henriot.

"But perchance," thought Blanche, "the baron does not believe we have a child. Oh, why does not Catherine bring me little Henriot, that I may prove it? Ay, I would rather prove my shame than be false to him who is, in heaven's sight, my husband. Oh, where is Catherine? Can aught have befallen her, or the child? If she comes not within the hour I shall flee and seek her and my child myself."

Catherine came not, and Blanche de Laveline resolved on instant flight. She would take the road straight onward and before her. Night is propitious for escape. The very presence of the two armies near the chateau was favorable; surely among so many soldiers she could hide. The roads were full of people fleeing from their homes, before the advancing troops. A woman like herself, disguised, apparently poor and obscure, could pass along probably unnoticed, certainly unsuspected. Somehow she would go somewhere, and get there some time; she would reach Brussels or Lille, and thence to Paris, to Versailles, to find, or at any rate, to look for Catherine and the child. She had her jewels with her, also a little money. Once far away, safe from the hated baron, she would write to her father, who would become reconciled to the inevitable.

And having made all the necessary personal arrangements, she left her light burning in her room, descended cautiously the stairs, and gained a door leading to the vegetable garden.

Without the slightest noise she slipped the bolt, and was free in the open air. The night was cold, clear, but not so very dark; but once in the woods she could not be seen; but as she turned the basement of the hall and passed the servants' room, she saw under a tree two forms, two strange forms, a man and a woman. She stopped, shivered with fear, was motionless through wonder. The two mysterious forms came slowly toward her. Blanche de Laveline was paralyzed—she could not advance, she could not retreat, she could not scream.

Suddenly she heard the woman's voice addressing her. She noticed that the woman wore a short skirt, and a little hat, with the brim turned up. It occurred to her that she had seen that woman before; her voice, too, sounded familiar as it said: "Mademoiselle, do not be alarmed, do not speak. Are you not Mlle. Blanche de Laveline?"

"*Mon Dieu!* I know her now," said Blanche; "are you not Catherine? Ah! you *are* Catherine," and impulsively forgetting all distinctions of rank, the women embraced. Catherine then hurriedly explained the position of affairs on her side and presented La Violette, who saluted the lady respectfully, but proudly. He felt that he was no longer a butt or a coward; he was a man, doing man's work, and protecting two women at night. What an adventure for La Violette!

"Ah! where is my little Henriot?" asked the boy's "other" and real mother, anxiously.

Catherine reassured her that the child was safe and happy.

"But your costume?" said Blanche de Laveline, looking at Catherine's peculiar dress as a cantinière. Catherine explained. "Oh, I must have my child to-night," cried Blanche abruptly.

Catherine told her that at this very moment little Henriot was doubtless sleeping in the wagon of the canteen of the Thirteenth Light Infantry, in the French camp. Whereupon Blanche insisted on going to the camp forthwith.

Catherine and La Violette both endeavored to dissuade her from this idea, advising her to remain in the chateau over night, and to seek her child in the morning. "But I must be wedded to the Baron de Lowendaal this very night," said Blanche; "that is, if I remain here, which I will not." And she told Catherine her exact position.

"What is to be done?" cried Catherine. Like the good wife she was, she added: "What a pity it is that my Lefebvre is not here, he could advise us." Then looking at La Violette she said: "Oh, imbecile, if only you could have an idea!"

But as it happened, "the imbecile" had one, and a very good one. He would leave the women in comparative safety in their hiding here, and go himself to the French camp, get the boy, and bring him hither ere midnight. It could be done.

"By a brave man, yes," said Catherine; "and La Violette," she added kindly, "you *are* brave."

La Violette's idea was adopted. Then suddenly Blanche insisted on accompanying him.

At this moment the Baron de Lowendaal was awaiting his expected bride in the chapel of his chateau, and was sending his servants to call down Mlle. de Laveline.

The women heard the direction given by the baron, and they saw the servants with lights, preparing to execute his orders.

"Oh, God!" cried Blanche to Catherine, "I am lost; they will see that I have gone."

"Everything now depends on gaining time, but how, oh, how?" said Catherine, in sore perplexity.

"Ah!" she exclaimed striking her thigh, as usual when pleased with herself, "I have it. It is sure, but rather risky."

"What is it, in heaven's name?" cried Blanche. "What way suggests itself to you? I am willing to undergo any risk whatever."

"Oh," said Catherine, "the danger would not be to you, but to *me*."

"To you?" asked Blanche; "what can you mean?"

"Why this," answered Catherine. "It *would* perhaps be best for you to go away now with La Violette, if only——"

"If only what, Catherine?"

"If only some one should stay here in your place, mademoiselle, to represent you to the baron. *That* would relieve you for some time and give you a chance, at least until the baron found out his mistake, which he would soon enough, I warrant me," she added.

"Oh, what an excellent idea," said Blanche de Laveline, almost joyously. "If some one could only make up like a bride, and hide her face like a modest bride should, and imitate my walk and gestures, in short, be married in my stead, why, it would mean my escape, my salvation. But," she added gloomily, "what is the good of a mere *idea* like this?"

"*I* will make it materialize, mademoiselle," said Catherine. "Come, we have no time to spare; give me your cloak; hasten away, the baron is coming for his bride."

Catherine wrapped herself quickly and deftly in

Blanche's cloak, while Blanche, having wrapped herself in a cape she carried with her, followed La Violette, having first embraced the clever and courageous Catherine.

As for La Violette, he walked as if on air, his head seemed in the clouds. He was so proud of his new role as protector of a wandering demoiselle.

Catherine watched them till their figures had disappeared in the night. "They are safe now," she said to herself, "and she will soon see her boy. But I," she thought, with a sigh, "shall I ever see and hug my good Lefebvre once more. A woman never knows how much she loves a man till she feels that possibly she may never set eyes on him again. Bah! what's the matter with me to-night?" recovering her accustomed nerve and spirits, "of course I shall hug my man again, and be well scolded by him, as I deserve. But I must not think of that now, I must try to play my new role as a bride. After all I ought to play bride pretty well; it is not so very long ago since I was one." She had won back her own good humor, and she really began to take a pleased interest in the exciting part she had chosen for herself. "After all," she thought, "every woman, even a laundress, or a cantinière, is a born actress."

Humming softly a bar of the Marseillaise, she walked bravely on toward the lighted hall where the servants were gathered after supper. She stood in the doorway, and imitating capitally the tones of Mlle. Blanche's voice, ordered one of the menials to tell Monsieur le Baron that Mlle. de Laveline awaited him in the chapel.

Having delivered herself of this speech, she retired slowly, and (she tried her best) majestically. "I couldn't really do better if I was doing the duchess," she thought, with an inward smile.

But she came near tripping in her pride of state, perilously near slipping and falling on the floor, for mademoiselle's cloak was somewhat too long for the somewhat short, as well as stout cantinière.

As she neared the chapel she heard voices. The baron said inquiringly: "You have the password, Leonard, you are sure?"

"Yes," she heard the man Leonard say in reply to the implied inquiry. "I managed it; I got a courier drunk and took his papers; nothing in them important save the orders and the password."

"All's well then, Leonard," said the baron in a tone of satisfaction. "While I am getting married, do you run to the Austrian guards to warn the commanding officer."

This dialogue had made Catherine prick her ears; it stirred her military instincts. "Courier—password—orders—whose? ours perhaps. I must off and tell Lefebvre. Treason afoot."

She turned from the chapel, then returned to it. "No, the nearest duty must come first; I am here to save my benefactress by personating her. This is the duty of *this* hour; next hour, if all is well, and I escape from this alive, or next day, maybe, I will tell Lefebvre what I have heard just now."

She entered the chapel, walking with measured step, and looking out for the train of her cloak. Suddenly the idea occurred to her: "What if the baron and this Leonard have been plotting to surprise the French camp to-night, surprise the Thirteenth in their sleep. No, no, that is simply impossible," she said to herself assuringly. "The Thirteenth sleeps with one eye open, and no 'Kaiserlicks,' even with stolen passwords, will be allowed to get within gunshot."

And somewhat calmed she sat down in one of the two armchairs, placed before the chapel altar for the happy couple.

The priest was already prepared and waiting for the ceremony of the nuptial mass; he was meanwhile wrapt in his devotions—he was praying in a corner, and took no heed of her.

Catherine Sans-Gêne, who was now once more demonstrating her claim to her "don't care" sobriquet, quietly, yet keenly, looked round about the chapel, in which she was so soon to play so conspicuous a part.

She didn't like its appearance at all. The old altar-pieces, the ornaments—such as they were—the little oil lamp, and the four lighted candles—she sniffed at them all.

"Bah!" she murmured, "this is a fitter place for a funeral than a wedding. How much longer will I have to wait, I wonder."

Her waiting was not long. The chapel door opened, there was a noise of feet and a clink of swords.

Catherine, to keep up her disguise as long as possible, wrapped her person completely in Blanche's cloak, and kneeling down thereby avoided turning round.

The priest rose slowly, bowed twice or thrice, approached the altar, and read the marriage ritual of the church.

The baron took Catherine's hand. "I had hoped," he said, "to have led you hither myself, but I appreciate your modesty and timidity." Here Catherine moved slightly; she was inwardly agitated with laughter.

"Now may I take my place at the side of my—my wife?" he asked.

Catherine did not speak nor stir.

The marquis now approached. "I am glad you have come to your senses, daughter; I congratulate you on being reasonable, at least," the marquis said.

Then looking at his supposed daughter, he cried: "But remove your cloak, my child, you cannot marry in a traveling cloak; that comes after the ceremony. Besides," he added, "you must do honor to our invited guests and witnesses, to the Austrian officers, whom your husband has invited to the ceremony, to the officers of General Clerfayt."

Hearing this name, so detested by every true Frenchman and Frenchwoman of that period, Catherine at once complied with the suggestion of the Marquis de Laveline. She cast aside her traveling cloak, and stood revealed in her tricolored skirt.

The marquis and the baron looked on, dumb for a moment in amazement. "This is not my daughter," the marquis contrived to say at last.

"This is not the woman who is to be my wife," cried the baron, white with anger. "Who are you?" he demanded of the bogus bride.

The chapel became a scene of wild confusion.

The priest endeavored to preserve the sanctity of the time and place. He looked toward the cross, he held his arms outstretched, he uttered the sublime formula:

"*Benedicat vos, omnipotens Deus, Dominus vobiscum.*"

He waited for the answer that should be returned—"*Et cum spiritu tuo.*"

But the confusion was too general for any one present to follow the ritual. The priest withdrew. The Austrian officers, who had just arrived, surrounded Catherine. "She is a Frenchwoman, she is a cantinière. What can it mean!" The wonder of the man, who uttered these words, and who seemed to be in command, was almost comical.

"You are right, for once, even if you are an Austrian," cried Catherine, addressing this personage. "I am a Frenchwoman and a cantinière, Catherine

Lefebvre of the Thirteenth Light Infantry, *not* at your service."

"Really," continued Madame Sans-Gêne, absolutely enjoying the tumult she had caused. "This seems to be too much for you, it has turned your stomach, my lads."

She was ready now for anything—everything, anybody—everybody; ready to laugh in the face of the discomfited bridegroom, ready to bandy words with the raging marquis, ready to snap her fingers at the Austrian officers, who, seeing her bold bearing, began to think that her regiment must be somewhere near, in hiding perhaps, in that very chapel, at that very moment, ready to sound a bugle-call, or a battle cry, and to rush upon them from that very chapel, under the protection of the gods of war.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DEBT OF GRATITUDE—THE EVE OF BATTLE—THE WAR SONG AND THE VICTORY.

When the first moment of surprise was over, one of the Austrian officers seized Catherine by the shoulder.

"You are my prisoner, madame," he said sternly.

"Prisoner," said Catherine, "why, I am not fighting, but—but—" she was at a loss for a word, "visiting."

"Do not jest, madame," replied the officer; "you have introduced yourself into this chateau, of which I have taken possession in the name of the Emperor of Austria; you are a French citizen, and you are in Austrian territory. I arrest you."

"That is not at all gallant," cried Catherine, "arresting women."

"You are a cantinière," said the officer, "connected with the French army."

"True, but a woman all the same. Besides, cantinières are not soldiers," cried Catherine.

"You are not taken as a soldier," said the officer, "but as a spy." Catherine's face blanched for the first time at this word, so hateful and fatal in wartime, "spy." "Let some one get four men to guard this woman till she has been tried," ordered the officer.

The baron, who had rushed to Blanche's room, now returned to Catherine. "Gentlemen," he cried in a voice choked with wrath, "this woman is the accomplice of a flight. She has aided my fiancée in her escape. Where is Mlle. de Laveline?" he asked furiously of Catherine.

Catherine laughed. "Go to the French camp," she cried to the baron, "you will find her there."

The marquis whispered to the baron: "If she has gone to the French camp, at least she has *not* gone to De Neipperg."

"But nevertheless," asked the baron wonderingly, "for what can she have gone to the French camp?"

"To get her child," answered Catherine calmly.

These words were really the very first intimation that either the baron or the marquis had received of Blanche's secret, and it mystified them both, as well as shocked and horrified the father.

The two men were for the moment dumb.

"What on earth do you mean, woman?" asked at last the marquis, like a man dazed.

"What I say," answered Catherine. "Your daughter has gone to rejoin her child—little Henriot—a lovely little cherub. Oh, he's far better looking than any child of *yours* could ever be, Monsieur le Baron."

The marquis and the baron strode away, each full of their own thoughts.

The baron's man, Leonard, had heard what had been said; he saw now that any hope of a hold on the Lady Blanche through her secret was over. The child was no longer a secret, but he resolved to go forthwith to the French camp; he had the stolen password. "Perchance I may still do something, make something," he said to himself. "We shall meet again, my lady," and the cunning rogue slipped away unnoticed.

"Baron," said the Austrian officer who had arrested Catherine, as he saw Lowendaal coming his way, "have you anything to say to this prisoner here?" pointing to Catherine.

"No, no," cried the baron in a fury. "No, no, take her, guard her, punish her, shoot her, but find out first about Mlle. de Laveline and her—her child."

"We shall imprison her in one of the rooms in your chateau till to-morrow," replied the officer; "then she shall be questioned."

"No," cried Catherine, "for by to-morrow the soldiers of the republic will be in possession here, and you all will be dead or captured."

"Take her away," ordered the officer to the guard; "carry her away if she resists."

The guard advanced toward Catherine.

"Come not near me," shouted Catherine. "The first man of you who moves is dead," and drawing from her belt her "two bulldogs," her pistols, and aiming at the men, she prepared to fire.

"Advance! seize her!" cried the officer; "are you afraid of a woman?"

The guard approached Catherine, despite her pistols. She was about to keep her word and fire, when through the darkness and near the chapel, sounded the roll of the drum.

"Ah! my lads of the Thirteenth," cried Catherine, in joy.

"Ah! the French!" cried the baron in dismay.

The Austrians vanished, the baron and the marquis hid themselves in the chapel, where the priest once more was praying.

The drum beat louder and louder, but no French troops appeared, only La Violette entered, beating a drum.

It was now Catherine's turn to be astonished. "Where is your regiment?" she asked.

"Why, in the camp, of course," answered La Violette; "but I got back here just at the right time to help you, did I not?" he added. "But let us close the door and talk," he suggested.

He locked the door and then made his explanations. He had conducted Mlle. de Laveline to the French camp, but midway he had met a patrol, led by Lefebvre himself, whereupon La Violette had given the lady into his charge, and seizing a drum (he was always fond of the sound of the drum) had returned as quickly as possible to the chateau and Catherine. Seeing and hearing what was going on, and learning in what trouble the woman he loved was in, the idea had occurred to him, of frightening off Catherine's enemies by making them believe that the French were attacking the chateau, an idea which he had carried out by the aid of a picked-up drum.

"It was cleverly done, my brave lad," said Catherine to La Violette, and she laughed to think how one drum in the hands of a half-witted fellow had frightened off noblemen, officers and soldiers.

"But how is my husband?" she asked anxiously of La Violette.

"Well; and more anxious about you than you can imagine," answered La Violette. "He will keep as near you as possible, and at my signal—four shots—he will rush to your assistance with his men."

Suddenly the chateau was surrounded—by a real regiment this time—and not French but Austrians.

"Open, or we will force the door," cried a commanding voice outside.

"Shall I give the signal to Lefebvre," asked La Violette of Catherine, "shall I fire the four shots?"

"No," she answered; "these Austrians now are too many even for him, my husband. We must wait and take advantage of events. Meanwhile open the door, then let us hide here in the chapel."

La Violette obeyed instructions.

The Austrian soldiers rushed into the chapel and soon discovered and dragged out Catherine and La Violette.

"Colonel," said one of the Austrian soldiers to a man in a richly embroidered cloak, "shall we shoot this man and this woman as spies? They have been adjudged such."

"I demand that we be treated as prisoners of war," cried Catherine boldly.

"A woman," said the man in the embroidered cloak, looking at Catherine coldly. "Well, as they are spies, let them be shot."

Again Catherine shouted, interrupting him: "We are prisoners of war, we are not spies."

"Woman," said the man in the cloak, "how can you claim to be a prisoner of war when the battle is not yet begun?"

"Yes, it has begun," cried Catherine.

"When?" asked the man in the cloak.

"About two hours ago," answered Catherine.

"And by whom?" asked the man in the cloak.

"By me, by us two," Catherine said, pointing to La Violette.

"This is mere quibbling," cried the officer, the Austrian colonel. "They *are* spies," he said, turning to his men.

"We are *not*," persisted Catherine. "Besides," she continued, "you have no right to shoot us, because we have given ourselves up, we have voluntarily surrendered."

The man in the cloak shook his head coldly.

"Ah! then," shouted Catherine, "take care of yourselves, for if you wrong us we shall be avenged, and at once. Expect no mercy from the soldiers of the Thirteenth; they are not far off, nor will they be slow at reaching here. My husband, who is a captain, will avenge me, will avenge us both, as surely as my name is Catherine Lefebvre."

The man whom they called colonel, the commanding officer, the man in the cloak, on hearing the words "Catherine Lefebvre," started in surprise. He even came forward a few steps, to see as plainly as he could in the semi-darkness who the woman was who had spoken thus.

"Are you, madame, related to a certain Lefebvre who served in the guard at Paris, and who married a washerwoman whom they called Sans-Gêne?" he asked with a politeness strongly in contrast to his previous tone and manner.

"Sans-Gêne," cried Catherine, astonished beyond measure, "that is the name they have given me. I am the washerwoman you refer to, and Captain Lefebvre is my husband."

The colonel was strongly agitated at this statement of Catherine's. He advanced closely toward her, made a movement as though about to take her by the hand, then throwing back his cloak, raising his head and looking her full in the face, he asked her: "Do you not recognize me?"

Catherine, still more surprised, almost startled, stepped back, saying as she looked at the officer: "I think I have heard your voice before, and your features seem familiar. It is as if I had even seen you dimly."

"Yes," said the officer softly, almost tenderly, "yes, dimly, through the smoke of cannon. Have you forgotten the tenth of August in Paris?"

"The tenth of August," cried Catherine. "Oh, now I recollect, you are the Austrian officer, the wounded man."

"Yes," said the officer, now all smiles and softness; "I am the Count de Neipperg, whom you so kindly rescued, and who has been always grateful. Ah! madame," he continued, "let me embrace you, for to you I owe my life," and he advanced with open arms toward her.

But Catherine Lefebvre shrunk back from him. "I thank you, colonel," she said, "for having remembered me so fervently, but what I did for you that day, I did for humanity. You were unarmed and wounded, yet hunted down; I protected you, as best I could, without stopping to ask under what flag you were wounded, nor why you fled, but that was on the tenth of August. To-day," she continued, almost sternly, "I find you wearing the uniform of the enemies of my country, commanding soldiers who are the foes of my comrades, the invaders of my native land. Under these circumstances I desire to forget what happened in Paris. I almost feel as if I merited reproach from my husband, from my friends, the soldiers of my regiment; from this boy, La Violette, who stands here beside me, a prisoner. I feel as if I have incurred *their* censure by having saved *your* life, you an Austrian, an aristocrat, a colonel who would order his men to shoot people like this brave lad" (here La Violette, listening, seemed to expand with pride), "and myself—people who have given themselves up.

"So, colonel and count as you may be," concluded Catherine, "speak not to me of the tenth of August; remind me not that I preserved an enemy." She placed her hands on her hips and looked scornfully upon the officer, who was silent awhile. Catherine's plain speech, delivered with her usual energy, had affected him profoundly. But at last he spoke earnestly, and with evident sincerity:

"Catherine, my preserver," he said, "I do not deserve your reproaches. You serve your country, why should not I serve mine? Why should I not fight for my flag as your brave husband fights under his? We cannot all be born in France."

His questions were unanswerable, his statement was a truism. Catherine inwardly felt that De Neipperg was talking sense, but she would have died ere she confessed as much.

He continued: "Do not thus hate me or despise me, Catherine. You may choose to forget the tenth of August, but I will not, for I cannot, and as colonel of the staff of the imperial and victorious army——"

"*Not yet* victorious," interrupted Catherine.

"It will be so to-morrow," he continued; "but be this as it may, the colonel of the Empire who commands here, has not forgotten the debt he contracted as a soldier in the Tuileries, he remembers his obligations as the wounded man of the laundry at Saint-Roche."

Then making a sign to the guard around her to release her, he cried:

"Catherine Lefebvre, you are free."

Catherine advanced and shook herself, as though getting rid of imaginary shackles. "Thanks, colonel," she said simply and naturally.

"But La Violette," she added, pointing to her tall, thin companion, who was standing as erect as possible, as if desirous of showing his valor to his enemies. "Is he not free also?"

"No," said the colonel decidedly, "that man is a soldier and an enemy; he came here by a stratagem—a trick—he shall be shot as a spy."

"Then you will have to shoot me with him," said Catherine Sans-Gêne. She said this in her ordinary tone, as if being shot as a spy was an everyday affair. "It shall not be reported through the camp that I, Catherine Lefebvre, cantinière of the Thirteenth Light, left a brave lad to be killed by the Austrians, who but for me would never have been a prisoner. So, colonel, give your orders, and oblige me by being quick about it; one don't want to wait too long when one is to be killed; I am not here for fun. There is nothing amusing in the thought of taking a number of shots into one's body, when one is young, and when one loves one's husband. My poor Lefebvre! He will grieve. But such is war!"

"Pardon me, colonel," now piped La Violette, in his shrill childish treble. "I beg that you will shoot me, but me only—I deserve to be shot; but Madame Lefebvre here has done nothing. She came to bring a lady news about her child——"

"A child! *what* child?" exclaimed the colonel excitedly. "My God! I remember now, you were" (to Catherine) "entrusted with *her* child; you were to bring that child——"

"To Jemmapes; yes, monsieur," said Catherine.

"Good woman! brave heart!" cried De Neipperg, looking volumes of gratitude at Catherine; "what you have risked for me and mine! But where is our child?"

"With its mother, safe in the French camp," answered Catherine. "Mademoiselle Blanche has fled to avoid a marriage with a baron. She preferred a count," looking at De Neipperg. "And it was La Violette here, who conducted mademoiselle to the French camp."

"Ah! then," said De Neipperg, now looking kindly on La Violette, whom but a few moments before he had frowned upon as a spy, "I see I must free La

Violette as well. Catherine, once more I tell you, you are free. Go, and take your comrade with you. I shall send two men to accompany you to the outposts. You will see Blanche, tell her I love and long for her more than ever; tell her I will wait for her after the battle on the road to Paris——"

"You mean Brussels," saucily interrupted Catherine Sans-Gêne.

Neipperg continued, not noticing her sally: "Hasten away, Madame Lefebvre. Catherine, use what remains of the night to regain your camp, and believe me I do not yet consider my debt of gratitude as paid in full. I shall ever be in your debt, but perhaps some day, I may be able to——"

"Pshaw!" cried Catherine, interrupting him, "we are quits, I tell you, or rather, I owe you something for La Violette. Come, you tall boy, march!" she almost shouted to La Violette, who departed like a whole army in martial state.

As for Catherine Sans-Gêne, with her hands on her hips, her cocked hat, and her tricolored cockade, she went out defying the Austrians.

As she crossed the threshold of the chapel, she turned and said: "*Au revoir*, gentlemen, I shall return before noon with Captain Lefebvre and his sharpshooters."

Neipperg watched with anxiety the departure of Catherine. He wondered if he would ever really, as the brave cantinière had implied, see Blanche and his little son once more? How could she, a young girl with a child, escape danger in the very midst of hostile armies? But one joy at least was his, the marriage plotted by the baron and the marquis had not yet taken place. Blanche was free, and might one day be his before the world. He looked about him for Lowendaal and Monsieur de Laveline, but neither were to be found. On inquiry he was told that the pair had taken conveyance to Brussels. Neipperg was for the time comparatively content, yet two questions still troubled him: How could he meet Blanche? how could he see his child?

The battle was about to begin, he must await its results. Surely the mob of volunteers forming the republican army could not cope with the veteran soldiers forming the imperial army. But even if the French were routed, what might not happen to Blanche and to the child? The reflection caused him anguish.

Suddenly a confusion near him arrested his attention. He asked its cause, and was told that a wild-looking young woman, with torn dress and disheveled hair had been caught attempting to enter the chateau. She claimed to be the daughter of the Marquis de Laveline; she had been arrested and taken in charge by the sentinels.

Neipperg was startled, and his heart began to beat fast. Could this woman be Blanche at the chateau, when Catherine Lefebvre had just assured him that Blanche was in the French camp? Yet the woman was really Blanche de Laveline, her dress disordered by the brambles and bushes she had passed through in the fields. Her lover rushed to her and embraced her passionately. Fate, as often happens, had in the most unexpected manner, relieved him from one of his anxieties; he saw Blanche again.

Amid tears and smiles she explained her appearance. She had reached the French camp in safety, escorted by Lefebvre's soldiers. She had found the canteen of the Thirteenth Light Infantry, and had found there a sleeping child. She clasped the little sleeper in her arms, when by the light of the lantern carried by one of her soldier guides, she saw that the child was not her boy; it was a girl, who, when she at last understood the now distracted mother's questions, told her that "Henriot was not here; he must have gone to see them shooting off the cannons," adding in her childish treble, "He is a bad boy because he didn't wake me up too, to go with him."

A moment later a passing soldier told her that he had seen a man, in a civilian's dress, fleeing with a child, in the direction of the town of Maubeuge. From the vague description given, the mother's instinct told her that this child was hers, and that some villain, for some purpose, had stolen him.

Her instinct proved to be correct. The ambulance surgeon, named Marcel, was informed by a sergeant, named Renée, that a former orderly of General Beaurepaire had recognized a servant of the Baron de Lowendaal, named Leonard, in the French camp that night, and had seen him in the neighborhood of Catherine's canteen.

Blanche at once understood all. This Leonard, whom she had foolishly trusted, was a scoundrel, and had stolen her child to make capital out of him with the Baron de Lowendaal, who, having the child, would once more have the mother in his power.

And then with almost superhuman strength, the mother at once started back to the baron's chateau to retake her child. She had a terrible passage back; she was occasionally compelled to hide among rushes and reeds; she was forced to wade streams, her feet were bleeding, her clothes were torn, but she pressed on toward the baron's chateau, to confront the man who had stolen her child. And even now, amid her joy to find herself with the man she loved best in all the world, was mingled sorrow that she was destined to find here neither Leonard, the baron nor her little Henriot.

Then Neipperg told Blanche how the baron and the marquis had gone to Brussels, and assured her that "We will catch them and the scoundrelly Leonard to-morrow."

"But to-morrow is not *now*," cried the mother, "why not go after them *to-night?*"

"To-morrow," answered Neipperg, "I must go to battle; first I help to defeat the French, then I find our child. My duty as a soldier must take precedence even of my sorrow as a father."

Blanche sighed, but submitted. It is woman's way.

Then, for a moment forgetting the child, Neipperg thought of his love and duty toward the woman.

"Blanche," he said, "you are my wife in my sight and the sight of heaven. Why not seize this opportunity to become my wife in the sight of the world? You owe me a higher duty than even your obedience to your father; you must place an insurmountable obstacle between yourself and that odious baron; you must marry me here to-night. Will you not, my *wife?*"

And with smiles, blushes, tears, and an embrace, the wife consented to marry her husband.

"All has for some time been ready for your marriage to this Lowendaal," said Neipperg to Blanche; "you have now but to marry your Neipperg instead. The priest is still at the altar, the notary is still at the chateau asleep; we will wake him instantly and he can change the name of the bridegroom while the priest pronounces the nuptial benediction. It is a change for the better, and is easily made. Come, sweetheart, and make me, already the happiest of lovers, the proudest of husbands."

An hour later, in the chapel where Catherine Sans-Gêne had played the bride, Blanche de Laveline became the Countess de Neipperg.

Scarcely was the ceremony over when a volley of musketry gave notice that the battle was begun.

Trumpet-calls were heard, the drums beat to arms.

But the Count de Neipperg calmly, proudly conducted Blanche toward a group of Austrian officers.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I wish to present to you the Countess de Neipperg, my wife."

The officers bowed profoundly and all invoked blessings on this marriage, on the eve of a great battle in a chapel which now became transformed into a fortress from which volleys of cannon-shot thundered instead of the peal of wedding bells.

The spectators on the crest of Jemmapes, on the ever-memorable morning of November 6, 1792 (the Belgians whom the empire oppressed, and whom the republic freed), witnessed a majestic and never-to-be-forgotten sight over the hills.

The dawn rose pale and gray, while a light wind bent the tree tops and rustled the dry leaves.

The Austrians, Hungarians and Prussians, in vast numbers, held the heights. The hussars, with their furred coats; the grenadiers with their tall bonnets; the infantry with their semi-conical caps; lances, cavalry sabers glistened, shone, twinkled in the light of that autumn morn.

Below were the Tyrolese sharpshooters, behind redoubts, while the artillery was ready for its fatal work.

The advantage of position was with the well-fed Austrian army. The French were badly located, and were absolutely hungry, but the volunteers promised themselves a dinner after they had defeated the Austrians. They sang the Marseillaise in chorus; the song stirred them to victory, and then they rushed in a flood upon the foe.

The battle of Jemmapes was a hurricane. Only the bayonet and the cannon were used.

The old Imperial forces were absolutely cut to pieces or shot into nothingness, by raw young republican heroes.

The Parisian recruits behaved magnificently. They carried three redoubts; they routed the superb Imperial dragoons; they were commanded by General Dampierre.

Generals d'Harville, Dumouriez, Ferrand, Beurnonville, Thévenot, shared the honors of the day.

Lieutenant Philip Egalité (afterward King Louis Phillippe) was in the battle, but his troops were led to victory by another Frenchman, a common soldier, formerly the valet of General Dumouriez, by name Baptiste Renard. Lefebrve fought like a tiger.

The battle was one of the many "great" French victories. It preserved France from the invaders, it obliterated old Germany, it saved Belgium. It was the new republic's "Baptism of Fire."

The battle over, the victors took to eating and drinking; they were very hungry and very dry. Too late for dinner they took supper, and as they feasted, they gossiped over the incidents of the battle. Catherine Lefebvre, brave, bustling and good humored as ever, listened, and told some stories of her own adventures.

One of the soldiers spoke of a little child that had been found shut up in a room in the Chateau de Lowendaal, which had been held by the Austrians, but had now fallen into the possession of the French.

Catherine listened intently; she felt sure that this child was the missing Henriot, whose mysterious absence weighed upon her spirits deeply, despite of all her natural "high spirits."

"A man fled when we found the child," said the soldier who had given the information.

"Ah! it was that wretch, Leonard, I am sure," said Catherine; "you shot him, of course."

"Nay, he escaped."

"*Sacre bleu!* but where did you take the child? You did not leave him, I hope."

"I was obliged to do so. In escaping, the man set fire to a barrel of powder. We could not stay after that, *could* we?" said the soldier.

Catherine did not deign to anwser; she turned to the group around her.

"Friends, comrades," she said, "you have kind hearts, let us go now and look for that little child left alone in the ruins; perhaps he still lives."

No one stirred or said a word, but all went on eating and drinking.

"Well, don't speak all at once," cried Catherine, finding no one spoke at all.

"I am wounded," now said one; "I haven't finished the soup," said another; "I must get myself into condition for more fighting," said a third.

While the fourth, who had found and left the child, growled out that "There might be more powder barrels to burst, and that after all, a child, especially when it is somebody else's child, ain't worth risking one's skin for."

"I am going anyway," cried Catherine, "even if I go alone. My husband is busy at the outposts, and you are cowards," she hissed the word at them. "I promised the child's mother to take care of him, and I shall keep my word. So eat, drink, and then sleep, children." ("You hogs," she added, *sotto voce*), "good-night, (go to the devil)," she added, under her breath.

Renée, the handsome sergeant, now arose from the group. "Madame Lefebvre," he said, "I will go with you. Two are more courageous than one."

"And three more brave than two," squeaked La Violette, likewise rising. The latter carried a scabbardless sword, and his uniform was full of sword-cuts; he wore a captain's cap, taken from the head of an Austrian officer whom he had killed.

"Brave boy," said Catherine. She had already begun to like and to respect her boy-lover; she now learned to respect and like him even more.

The handsome sergeant stood still a moment as if waiting for some one to join them. The "some one" came; he was Dr. Marcel. Catherine was somewhat surprised at his appearance, but Renée wasn't.

"A doctor is the very man we need now," he (she) said.

"The child may be hurt," suggested La Violette, "let the doctor go with us."

And the doctor went. So La Violette and Catherine led the way, followed by Renée and Marcel, who exchanged a kiss in the dark.

The fields were full of the dying and the dead, piles of débris and broken weapons were to be found everywhere. There is nothing more terrible than a battlefield after a battle.

But amid all the horrors of war little Henriot was found safe. There was little need of any doctor; the child was weak but well, and as glad to see Catherine as Catherine was glad to see him.

Marcel tended to his little scratches, and he was soon his lively, playful self once more. Brought back to the French camp the lad, saved on the field of battle, was adopted by "the Thirteenth Light." He became "the child of the regiment."

BOOK THIRD.

THE MATRIMONIAL ADVENTURES OF NAPOLEON AND JOSEPHINE.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE STAR OF DESTINY RISES—AND THE MAN OF DESTINY FALLS IN LOVE.

Toulon, like Lyons, Marseilles, Bordeaux and Caen, became a resort for traitors. The Royalists and the Girondists opened the gates, alike of the arsenal and the town, to the allies.

All the poetical charm which clings round the Girondists cannot absolve them of the crime of treason to their country.

By good luck the cannons of the republic were entrusted at this juncture to the then comparatively obscure artillery officer, Napoleon Bonaparte.

What seemed to be mere chance had given Bonaparte this place. On a trip from Avignon to Nice he stopped at Toulon to see his comrade, Salicetti. This personage introduced him to Commander Carteaux, whom in a short period Bonaparte surperseded, having impressed the republican representatives with his superior qualifications for the post.

Napoleon was now twenty-four years of age, and began for the first time in his life to think well of himself. His night of despair was over, the day was dawning, a reaction had taken place; he began to dream of greatness.

And the very first thing he did with his good fortune was to use it to advance the personal, social and matrimonial interests of his family. He was completely satisfied with Joseph Bonaparte's marriage, already alluded to. In fact Napoleon envied Joseph's luck. He often remarked "that Joseph is a lucky fellow. It is a great thing to marry a rich soap manufacturer's daughter," and such he regarded it at that time.

And for several years Napoleon really and sincerely regretted that he had not been able to win as a wife Mlle. Désirée, soapmaker Clary's second daughter, previously referred to.

But even his own ill-luck in this case annoyed him less than an unfortunate affair in which his brother Lucien was concerned.

This matrimonial *faux-pas* of Lucien was one of the sore points in Napoleon's career, a thorn in his side. He did not get over the annoyance for ten years.

Lucien was good but rather weak, and through his brother's influence got a modest post in the military administration, and had just sense and merit enough to keep it, but no more.

He was very fluent in speech, though like many weak natures, quite a tavern orator, very fiery in his language, good-looking, and withal precisely the sort of man to captivate a certain sort of woman—such a woman for example as the pretty, but rather coarse daughter of the restaurant keeper at whose establishment the young orator took his meals.

The inn-keeper's name was Boyer, and he was quite well-to-do in his way. The daughter was quite a belle too in her own circle. She used to wait upon her father's customers, and thus she often listened enchanted to the eloquence of the young, ardent, and handsome Lucien Bonaparte.

Lucien soon noticed that the young girl liked him, and this of course made him feel very favorably disposed toward the young girl. But she was more in love than he was, and despite the conventional modesty of young French girls before marriage, the mademoiselle made most of the advances, and finally told Papa Boyer that she was resolved to have Monsieur Lucien for a husband.

Papa Boyer had formed other plans for the disposal of his daughter's hand, but he knew his place. He was a dutiful father—more after the American pattern than the French—and when his daughter declared her intentions he bowed before her will, and prepared to receive Lucien as a son-in-law.

He had one comfort, Papa Boyer; he would now get rid of the annoyance of presenting Monsieur Lucien every week with a bill, which he always put off paying till the next week, and didn't pay then. If Lucien owed him any more money after he married his daughter, why it would be all in the family, and wouldn't matter. So Boyer had made the best of a bad bargain.

But Napoleon did not resemble Boyer in this respect, nor in any other. When he discovered that he was to have an inn-keeper's daughter for a sister-in-law, he was simply furious. Already he was beginning to foresee his future greatness, and was seriously enraged with any act of his family which could injure his fortune (and theirs) or lessen his influence or renown.

So he quarreled with his brother, and severed all relations with him for awhile.

And he never forgave the innkeeper's daughter, Christine Boyer, whose only fault had been that she loved his brother.

She was sweet-tempered, however, and resigned, though she made several attempts in vain to appease Napoleon, and gain his good will.

One touching letter written by her is preserved. It was written when she was about to become a mother.

"Permit me," she wrote, "to call you brother. According to your decree, I fled from France and came to Germany. Within one month, I hope to present you a nephew, for I feel that it is to be a boy. I promise you, he shall be a soldier; but I want him to have your name, and be your godson. Do not refuse me. You will not disclaim us for our poverty, for you are really our brother, and will be the uncle of my children. We love you better than fortune. May I some day be able to prove all my tender affection for you."

But Napoleon remained deaf to the appeal. He kept the tavern keeper's daughter out of his heart forever.

He was ashamed of the woman because he feared to present her to some other woman, no better, but greater—as the world counts greatness. He was always dreaming of a wife and relatives, who should flatter his vanity.

But about the time that Lucien married Christine Boyer, Bonaparte's own personal affairs reached a crisis.

He had lost his protectors; the two Robespierres had been guillotined.

An insignificant artillery captain, named Aubry, had been appointed minister of war. He had hated the Robespierres, and hated Bonaparte as their friend; he was also envious of Napoleon's rapid rise in favor. So he sent him away where he would have no further chance to distinguish himself. Napoleon refused to go where he was sent, and was therefore dismissed from the army.

In the rage of desperation, Napoleon offered himself and sword to the Sultan of Turkey; the East had always attracted him. One side of his nature, as fatalist and dreamer, was thoroughly oriental.

Perhaps he would meet some glorious, dark-eyed woman there, who would satisfy alike his body and his soul. If his brother Joseph had not at this period come to his assistance, Constantinople and not Paris might have been the capital of a Napoleonic empire.

Finally his opportunity came. A decison of the Convention caused an insurrection in Paris. A general was needed in Menou's place, who had been defeated by the mob. On the night of the insurrection Bonaparte was at the Feydeau theater. He went at once to the Assembly, where the man of the hour, Barras, appointed him General of the Interior.

He was in power now, and his power could not be taken from him. Yesterday poor and without resources, he was to-day the master of Paris, aye, the master of the nation.

His star, which had for years by turns been dim and bright, now shone with a steady and clear light from above. It was destined to be a dazzling beacon light throughout France and Europe for twenty years.

Fortune had indeed smiled suddenly upon Napoleon Bonaparte.

An utterly unexpected and resistless sweep had placed him on the very pinnacle.

Hitherto, despite his conceded military talent, and the praise he had received from men of position and influence, his name had been comparatively unknown and his position uncertain and precarious.

But the insurrection of October 3, 1795, had broken out, and brought him to the front.

Thanks to Barras, and to Fréron (who had already met Pauline Bonaparte the beauty of the family, and was about to propose to her), he was appointed to command, spite of the opposition of Carnot.

For a few moments Napoleon himself had even hesitated to accept the dazzling chance thus offered him; he would be assuming, with great power, still greater responsibility. It would be civil war that he would be compelled to face—a war of Frenchmen against Frenchmen—of Parisians against Parisians; if he failed his life would be forfeited, his name execrated. He was not made for civil wars, and besides the line of his sympathies carried him to a certain length with the insurrectionists themselves. They wanted what he had always professed to worship, *Liberté*, *Egalité*, *Fraternité*. And they demanded the resignation of all incompetent and corrupt office-holders.

But on the other hand, if he refused the position thus offered him, he lost his chance in life. Such opportunities come not twice to any man; and as for his country, the Convention with all its faults was better than no Convention at all. Its rule—any rule—was safer than that of the mob. There had been too much already of the mob in Paris—true liberty demands law. The defeat of the Convention by the insurrectionists now would neutralize all the glorious successes of the French army, at Jemmapes and elsewhere. The ruin of the Convention would mean the ruin of France. His first duty as a good citizen was to uphold the Convention, to defend established government even if administered by incapables.

So lifting his head Napoleon said to Barras: "I accept the command, but I solemnly warn you that my sword, once drawn, returns not to its scabbard until order is universally and completely re-established."

The next day he assumed his new position and was respectfully saluted, among others, by the mistress of Barras, Madame Tallien, who always worshiped the rising sun.

Napoleon, even in his pride of new-found power, almost blushed when he acknowledged the salute of Madame Tallien. For he remembered that a few days before he had gone almost humbly, almost timidly, to this woman to solicit her influence and her aid with Barras.

He had no money in his pocket then, and only soiled clothes on his back, and he wore long hair, parted in the middle, and unpowdered (because he could not pay a hairdresser). His boots were cracked, and he had inked his stockings, so that they would not show between the cracks. His uniform was threadbare; he was seedy, shabby, sad; but despite these disadvantages, this man of energy had called upon this woman, in her diamonds and full toilette, to invoke her aid. And the first thing the woman did was to give him an order for a suit of clothes so that he could appear before the Convention at least in presentable condition.

She was a wayward, perverse, wicked creature this courtesan, this Theresa Cabarrus, this mistress of Barras, but she befriended Napoleon when he needed a friend.

Napoleon's sudden rise to power at this period resembled the metamorphosis in fairy tales, in which palaces arise from pumpkins at the waving of a wand.

He made his headquarters in the Rue des Capuchines. He kept Junot and Lemarois near him; he sent for his uncle to be his secretary. He also sent fifty thousand francs to his mother and sisters.

He only kept cash enough for himself to buy a pair of fine shoes in the place of the cracked pair, some new stockings without any ink marks, and some gold embroidery for the new uniform he had obtained through Madame Tallien's order.

He at once helped his brothers. He had now wholly forgiven Lucien, for he took him as his aide; he obtained a consulship for Joseph, and paid for more schooling for Jerome.

CHAPTER XX.

"YEYETTE"—JOSEPHINE AS GIRL—WIFE—WIDOW—ADVENTURESS AND AS NAPOLEON'S IDOL.

FORTUNE had smiled suddenly upon Napoleon. He, who despite his war-like abilities and the praise of influential personages, had been until a few days since so humble, so obscure, was now the fashion in Paris.

It was at this opportune moment in his career that he bethought him of realizing his life-long dream of marrying some woman who should aid him socially and pecuniarily in maintaining his position.

He set about the matter coolly, almost mathematically, but ere long he upset all his own calculations by falling in love.

He had intended to look about him and do the best he could for himself in a matrimonial alliance, but he really fell in love with the first woman who came in his path.

It was at Madame Tallien's, while paying her a visit to express his genuine gratitude for her friendly influence in his behalf, that he first saw Josephine, then the Widow Beauharnais.

Who was this Josephine? She was a creole from the Antilles. She was one of those foreign adventuresses who are occasionally admitted into society although society really knows nothing about them.

These women are more seductive because they are so mysterious, and they come from afar. Foreign adventuresses are always preferred to the home articles.

Her maiden name was a long one—Marie-Josephine-Rose Tascher de la Pagerie. She was born June 23, 1763, in Martinique, in the parish of Notre Dame de la Purification. She had two sisters, Catherine-Marie-Désirée, and Marie-François. Her father was a well-descended planter, whose great ambition, like that of Napoleon, was to see his family well married. He had been captain of dragoons, chevalier of St. Louis, and page to the Dauphiness, but he had little land and less money. An aunt of Josephine, Madame Renaudin, secured a husband for her favorite niece. He was a younger son of the Marquis de Beauharnais, governor of the Windward Islands.

The marriage took place when both parties were children—he eighteen, she sixteen. But young as she was, Bonaparte was at that time *six years younger*, as a schoolboy at Brienne.

The couple came to Paris and lodged in the Rue Thévenot. Here was born their first child, Eugene, afterward Prince Eugene, viceroy of Italy.

The couple soon separated. The young husband grew tired of a coquettish, frivolous, extravagant wife, and started off to join Lafayette, Rochambeau, and Washington in America, and during his absence the future Queen Hortense was born—the mother of Louis Napoleon, afterward Napoleon the Third.

The absent husband, in the intervals of fighting for American independence against the English, made love right and left. Josephine, who had, with all her follies, been true to him, now followed his example. His absence therefore did not grieve her. It gave her a liberty she was happy to obtain.

She began to lead an irregular life. She had her lovers as well as her debts, her excitements as well as her troubles, her heights as well as her depths. She lived on the edge, or the outskirts, of society. The Beauharnais family belonged to the old Orleans nobility, so she was not absolutely ostracized at court; but she was barely tolerated, while her aunt Renaudin occupied, like herself, a somewhat equivocal position, and was not eligible at Versailles.

M. de Beauharnais, finally returning to France, procured a legal separation. As there were wrongs on both sides, the ex-wife received ten thousand livres alimony. She then revisited Martinique, and returned to France in 1791, accompanied by a marine gallant, one M. Scipio de Roux.

She found her ex-husband occupying a high official position. He had been elected several times president of the National Assembly. He proposed on that eventful night, the fourth of August, two memorable resolutions looking to the abolition of the old order of things—the admissibility of all citizens to all offices, and the equality of taxes for all classes of citizens.

Seeing her ex-husband prosperous and powerful, the ex-wife, woman-like, sought to be reconciled unto him; she succeeded. She pretended, perhaps really felt, for awhile humility and penitence. At any rate, she became a society queen in the Beauharnais mansion, on the Rue d'Université.

But the days grew dark; the Terror approached; Beauharnais was arrested hastily, illegally, and executed in the same manner. He was one of the early victims of the guillotine.

Beauharnais died as he lived, a brave man and a true gentleman. He appealed to the woman he left behind him to see that posterity did his memory justice. It has partially done so. Alexander de Beauharnais has his place in the revolutionary Pantheon, among the martyrs of the new evangel.

The revolution transformed Josephine from a social outcast into a great lady. During her husband's imprisonment she formed the acquaintance of several of the more prominent of the venerable survivors of *L'Ancien Regime.* She also gained the friendship of that peculiar woman already referred to, La Cabarrus, a courtesan who became Tallien's wife, and Barras' mistress.

It was in this woman's house that Josephine first met the slim and silent young conqueror, Napoleon Bonaparte.

By this time Napoleon had become "the fashion." Everybody was speaking of the general who had bounded into fame and power. Salons disputed for his presence, women smiled upon him, but he passed them by gravely, or carelessly; he felt himself a sovereign already.

Yet the Widow Beauharnais (already *passee*, and prematurely grave), with her creole nonchalance, won this "coming man" with her first effort.

Bonaparte's feelings were captivated at the very first meeting at Madame Tallien's. He felt himself dragged into the charmed circle of this "dark daughter of the isles;" he was spellbound, he was charmed, he fell prostrate.

She was not beautiful. Lucien Bonaparte, her future brother-in-law, has thus recorded his impressions of this woman:

"She was very languid, and did not have a single feature that could be called beautiful, though the soft curves of her slight, short figure suggested the graceful creole form; a face without natural freshness, which required the colors of her toilet to give it luster and brilliancy; everything indicated the remains of her early youth, as the painter, Gerard, has faithfully shown in his portraits of the first consul's wife. In the brilliant receptions of the Directory, to which Barras introduced me, she seemed to me no longer young, and inferior to the beauties who generally composed the court of the voluptuous director, and of whom the fair Tallien was the veritable Calypso."

This pen-portrait was not flattering, but it was correct.

Yes, Josephine, the Widow Beauharnais, was now over thirty-two years old, the mother of two children. She had lost all freshness. Her adventures, her loves, her cares, her travels, her late hours, her loose existence, had aided the work of time. And yet, at their very first meeting, she vanquished the man who vanquished the world.

Napoleon left the Talliens with a throbbing heart. His eyes were abnormally bright, but they did not burn for glory; he was tormented with a pang, but it was no longer hunger. For the while he even forgot his family; for the time being he did not think of conquering mankind, he thought only of one woman who had just told him that her friends, and those she wished to be friendly with, always called her not Josephine, but by the pet name of Yeyette.

CHAPTER XXI.

MADAME BONAPARTE AND AN INTERVIEW WITH BARRAS—A WOMAN ASKS FOR ADVICE AND TAKES IT.

BONAPARTE, whose life had hitherto been as clean as it had been industrious, whose only intoxications had been mental, became the ardent lover of the middle-aged woman whose pet name was Yeyette.

It is perfectly certain that Josephine never merited such excessive love; but the young general was in that psychological state in which the heart is peculiarly susceptible to dreams of an ideal woman.

Josephine was clever, but not a bluestocking. She never obtruded her smartness on a man. She pleased the young general most by pretending to be enormously, intensely interested in his generalship, in his strategy, in his victories, in himself.

Besides she possessed in Napoleon's eyes an aristocratic prestige. To him she was an aristocrat, *une grande dame* of the *ancient regime*, that *regime* which, spite of his republicanism, Napoleon, within his soul, adored. After all he had only been a Corsican gentleman on a small scale, and had seldom or never met a great court lady.

The prestige of nobility became as powerful after the Red Revolution as before. The guillotine had done away with the frayed glitter of the old school of aristocracy; but the new nobility took fresh life and new color.

And in the case of Josephine, Napoleon, who though even now a military genius, was still in worldly and social affairs almost a child, was not able to distinguish between the pinchbeck aristocracy and the real. He took the cunning, yet careless widow for a great lady. To tell the truth it was not the real woman Napoleon loved in Josephine, it was the ideal woman of his own creation and imagination. She was not the type of his ideal woman in her physique, but in her mentality and his own.

As a matter of fact Josephine's mature age helped her, not hindered her, with Napoleon. He had always sought to marry women older as well as richer than himself. He had wooed the Widow Permon, old enough, as she confessed herself, to be his mother. He had cared for Désirée Clary, the soap-maker's daughter, not for her youth, but for her dowry. With women Bonaparte, the rude soldier, the cold and pitiless politician, was always short and stormy, a style of courtship that suits mature women better than younger ones.

He wanted a wife who could rule a salon, a woman who had prestige, friends, an established social rank. Josephine represented such a woman unto him. She was aristocratic, like Madame Permon; she was well-to-do, like Désirée Clary; at least he thought so.

Unsentimental as it may sound, it was Napoleon's notion that Josephine Beauharnais was rich, which, as much as his passion for her, induced him to marry her.

Now Josephine was really far from being rich, but she was far from letting her new lover into the secret.

After the meeting at Tallien's, the widow invited her admirer to call at her little house, No. 6 Rue de Chantereine, where she dazzled him with her apparent luxury, all manufactured or hired for the occasion.

Her "little house" was but an humble and cheap lodging. To the practiced eye, lack of money would have been evident everywhere; but the Bonaparte eye was not "practiced" in this direction, and so, with two attendants, one Gauthier, who was at once her gardener, her coachman, her footman and her waiter, and one Mlle. Compoint, who acted as friend, companion and maid, the widow succeeded in dazzling Bonaparte. Why not? He knew really nothing as yet of luxury, and, being still a young though rising officer, he was socially invited to dine with a noble lady.

True this "little house" was only a part of the former Hotel de Chantereine, let to the Citizeness Talma for four thousand livres. Its cellars were without wine, even its woodshed was without wood, but a hired pair of horses, showy though lean, and a fine, second-hand coach, stood in full view, in evidence at the entrance. Josephine, tinseled Bohemienne and practiced coquette, maintained an apparent luxury; her toilettes were many but her *lingerie* was scant.

But every woman knows that light, airy, tastefully trimmed muslin gowns produce a charming effect, and cost next to nothing.

Napoleon was taken captive. He left the "little house," the showy but battered residence of a showy but battered woman, with his head turned and his senses dazzled. He had resolved that this Josephine, Widow Beauharnais, must be his wife!

He judged her, as many a man with the one thousandth part of his abilities has judged a woman before, by her exterior. He was not aware of her real character, origin, or position.

As a wife she would satisfy him wholly; his wife she was therefore to be. Nothing could ever withstand his will, once thoroughly determined. It shot to its purpose as though it were a shell fired from a cannon.

He did not hesitate, but it was Josephine who now hesitated for awhile. She had resolved to attract this rising young Bonaparte, and she *had* attracted hime, he was at her feet; but to *marry* him, to link her fate to his, that was another and more serious matter. Her present position, she was well aware, was precarious, but was not Bonaparte's also. After all, this Napoleon was but a new man, the *protegé* of Barras. Would Barras continue his interest in the young adventurer? How would the Directory regard her marriage with this new man? She would be cautious and see first what this worldly-wise though sensual potentate, this Barras, thought about the matter.

So one night she ordered her carriage and called at the Luxembourg, to have a talk with Citizen Barras, member of the Directory.

There was a fête at the Luxembourg on the night of Josephine's visit. She was elaborately dressed in the latest style, in a Flora-like costume, light as a floating vapor, almost transparent, revealing through its soft tissue her ripe, rich, dusky, ivory flesh.

She looked at her best, as she intended to do, not only to please the eye of Barras, but to shine among, and if possible above, all other women who might be present.

She also wished to display herself before Bonaparte, and to show him as her admirer before the social world of Paris.

Josephine had passed some tender hours with Barras ere this, in times gone by, but still remembered; she had never been his mistress, but a love, *en passant*. Barras was rough, brutal, with a weather-beaten face, a democratic pasha, but he made pretensions to elegance, as a member of the regency. He had been a man of many loves, of whom Josephine Beauharnais had been one, an hour's queen.

No woman resisted this man Barras. He broke hearts as well as heads. Though a revolutionist by profession he was an aristocrat by nature. Tall and strong, he hid under the mask of a staid director the manners and morals of a Don Juan of the barracks.

He carried his head high; he lifted his three-white-feathered-hat with an air; he clanged carelessly a curved sword in a silver scabbard; he pleased the people at that time.

He became a species of uncrowned king, precisely what the mob at that period wanted. He had been the Louis XIV. of the army, he became a *grande monarque* in the republic. Even his vices aided him; his mistresses helped him to amuse the Parisians, and then he was a lavish entertainer and gave great fêtes.

Already the reaction from the Terror had commenced. The early days of the revolution were even now looked back upon as a nightmare. Men reveled in joy and intoxicated themselves with pleasures, wine, women, dance and song. Lawn parties every day and night, pretty girls in low-necked dresses, roses everywhere, equipages everywhere. A strange, wild period, full of life and color, a period that ages of time will never reproduce.

And this man, the voluptuous but crafty Barras, was the personification of his period—the embodiment of the follies, the passions and the force of the Directory.

He re-established order in the streets; he also restored pleasures in society. Was it a wonder, then, that young and old, men and women, adored him? He gambled freely, and he gave as freely; he ruled his world.

But a woman ruled him. The woman's name was La Cabarrus, the courtesan, known as Madame Tallien. She was the prime favorite of the man in power in Paris, and therefore the real power.

She was also the chief agent of social corruption. She played the role of a broker—a superb broker and dealer in political favors.

She aided the sybarite director in burying the revolution under flowers; she caused an orgy of drink and dance to follow the intoxication of blood and battle.

In the red revolution brother Frenchmen devoured each other—a feast of Atrides. But under the joint sway of Barras and La Cabarrus the times became a feast of Trimalcion.

A soirée at Barras' was a concentration of the distinction, the elegance, the virtue and the vice, the glory and the folly, in short, the society of the period. Young generals, old statesmen, Samsons and their Delilahs, the *nouveau riche*, the relics of the *ancien regime*, dandies, belles, fools and men of brains like Laplace, Monge and Volney—all were to be seen and heard in the halls of the Luxembourg; all glad to be alive, anxious to atone by pleasures present for the loss of pleasures in the past, careless of the future, each man and woman saying to him or herself: "If this could only last." While in the shadows, Talleyrand, just returned from America, sneered at the rottenness of a society over which, however, he hovered, like a vulture soon to devour the dead.

In the midst of the gay whirl Josephine found an opportunity to send word to Barras that she desired to see him a moment in private.

She was led to a small apartment beside the Director's "study," separated from it only by a thin partition.

While waiting for Barras she heard his voice in his "study." He was talking to Carnot, who was warning him against this new Napoleon. Barras warmly defended Bonaparte, whereupon Carnot withdrew, slamming the door behind him.

Barras now lifted a portiere and approached Josephine with a smile which had more of politeness than sincerity in it. Barras was really uneasy; what could this woman want? He had never allowed her to have a hold upon him. She had been glad, when poor and alone, to avail herself of his favor on any terms, and he had been, when younger, flattered with the favors she bestowed. But all that was over now on either side. There remained only the memory of past intimacy, the *soupçon* of passion long grown cold.

Josephine, rather timidly for her, told the object of the present interview.

"Somebody wants me to marry him, my dear director," she said without preface. "What do you think of it?"

"Think," answered Barras gallantly, "why, that you could make the lucky man supremely happy. Who is he?"

"You know him well," she replied smiling, "he is your friend, General Napoleon Bonaparte."

"Ah! Bonaparte," said Barras; "a person of promise, an eminently able artillery officer, a rising man."

"Yes," remarked Josephine, "and I think, a good man. He will be a father to the two children of Alexander de Beauharnais and a true husband to his widow."

"All very well, madame, but do you love him?" asked the director.

The lady hesitated, stammered. "No—that is, yes, —to tell the truth," she said, "I neither love nor dislike him as yet. I am undecided—such a state of indecision, they say in Martinique, where I was born, is bad for the soul."

"Ah! one must consider one's body a little when it comes to marriage," remarked Barras.

"True," the lady granted; "but then love is a cult, M. Barras; it needs faith, hope and counsel. I want to make up my mind about my course toward this man. I come to you for advice. To decide is ever, to a careless nature like mine, a task that I gladly yield to others. I have always found it easiest to do as I am told."

"Then how must my advice be given?" asked Barras smiling; "must I tell you to marry the general?"

"No, not necessarily so," said Josephine, "only advise me sincerely. I really admire him and his courage," she continued; "he saved society on that thirteenth Vendémiaire."

Then she and Barras joined in praising Napoleon, and the Director told the widow the story of his relation with him. How he had met Napoleon, a strange, poor, sternly silent young man, had liked him from the first, and had since found this liking more than justified.

"His face I do not think, or did not think at first, a fine one," said Barras, speaking of Napoleon; "but his pronounced features, his eyes quick and fiery, his movements, animated and alert, evince an ardent and determined spirit. He speaks little, but his large, broad forehead shows that he thinks much. He is a man, believe me, Josephine, a man of courage and conviction, who may be a hero and may become a great man. Take him since he wants you. I give you a friend's advice; you may believe me."

"Then, Barras, you advise me to marry him?"

"Yes, Josephine; and if you marry, you will learn to love him."

"Do you really think so, Barras? At present I must confess, that although he worships me, I sometimes almost fear him."

"Ah! Josephine, you are not the only one. All my colleagues, even Carnot, fear him."

"Ah! Barras, if he intimidates Directors, think what an impression he may make upon me, a woman."

"But, Josephine, you will get used to him ere long. Besides he *don't* love the Directors, but you say he *does* love you."

"I really believe he is very much in love with me at present, but, my dear Barras (between old friends like ourselves, there can be confidences like this) as I have passed my first youth, can I reasonably hope to retain his love? Is it not merely on his part a temporary delirium?"

"Do not fret too much about the future, Josephine; do not forever foresee misfortune or suffer by anticipation. Besides, this Bonaparte feels that he is destined to greatness; he claims to have his star."

"Ah! Barras, a negro woman down in Martinique once prophesied that I should wear a crown and be a queen. Now I confess I can hardly fancy that this Bonaparte shall ever be a king."

"Perhaps not, *ma chere* Josephine, but if he marries you, *some one* may give him as a wedding gift——"

"What, Barras?"

"The command of the army of Italy. But really, Josephine, I shall be missed from the fête. You seem surprised. Well, let us go together and astonish this Bonaparte, who I vow, is looking round for you in the salon at this moment. Let us congratulate this coming man: I, on his coming marriage, you, on his coming command."

And with the Widow Beauharnais on his arm, almost speechless at the decision which had been made in her behalf, and the favor the head of the Directory intended to show her future husband, Barras, assuming his most majestic air, re-entered the glittering salon, brilliant with light, with flowers and with women, accompanied by the future Madame Bonaparte.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW A GREAT MAN MARRIED AND WAS DECEIVED—THE TRUTH CONCERNING JOSEPHINE—THE SWORD FROM THE PYRAMIDS.

BONAPARTE, on February 23, 1796, was appointed general of the army of Italy. Carnot had yielded to the wish of Barras. There was one opposing voice only, that of Reubell, but he was overruled by his colleagues.

And a few days later, March 9th, the marriage of General Napoleon Bonaparte and the Widow Beauharnais took place.

At this period Bonaparte's life was all fever and love. He, in the literal meaning of the word, "adored" Josephine with all the ecstasy of a Carmelite monk, receiving what he regards as a divine revelation. Prostrated with emotion, he smothered his idol with his caresses, he wildly embraced her, he fiercely, almost brutally, flung himself upon her, he seized her in his arms, he cast himself upon the gauzy draperies in which, in fond memories of the tropical home where she was born, the now almost beautiful widow loved to array her charms, and acted like a barbarian pillaging a palace. In his kisses he sometimes tore his darling's dresses. His hands were always trembling when they touched her, his lips always hungry for hers. With all the untamed exuberance of his exceptional nature, he was on fire with the sense of possession. He loved a woman, and was, he thought, loved by her, for the first and last time in his life; and his passion, long accumulated and repressed, burst at length with the violence of a river in a flood. And with the double joy of vanity and love, both gratified, mingled the bliss yet higher, to a nature like his, of having gained his point, of having fulfilled his will.

For the time the great man, like many a little man, forgot himself—forgot his pride, his reserve, his ambitions for success and conquest, in a delirium of passion. In possessing Josephine he fell, as it were, into an intoxication of madness.

He was a changed man, he became demonstrative, he grew nervous, he laughed, he talked, he wept.

But his honeymoon was short. Two days after the official ceremony he departed from Paris to Italy. He was now indeed upon the road to glory. Henceforth he stopped at the inns of love only between victories, until the fatal day when he was destined to stumble upon the marriage bed of Archduchess Marie Louise of Austria.

One point here *en passant*. In the certificate of his marriage with Josephine, Napoleon, to lessen the discrepancy of age between his bride and himself, gallantly recorded himself as two years older than he actually was, while on her part, Josephine, womanlike, recorded herself as four years younger than the truth. It was a bride's natural whim to be no older than her young husband, but it was fated to have unpleasant consequences for the woman in later years.

During his Italian campaign, when not burning with war-like fervor, Napoleon was on fire with love for Josephine.

He never allowed a day to pass without penning some tender epistle, though, sooth to say, these love-letters were generally rather too emphatic in their tone, suggesting the style of a Saint-Preux writing to Julie.

Even when weary with travel, and sleepless, the young general, forgetting his cares and dangers, never failed to fill a sheet with living words, and dispatch it by a courier traveling day and night, to Paris and to Josephine. His tender messages were carried as quickly and as carefully as his accounts of battles won. To the man who wrote the letters and won the battles, one was as important as the other.

She was in truth the queen of France, that insignificant and sensual creole. The people of Paris, intoxicated with Napoleon's triumphs, regarded her as an empress already, and hailed her when she appeared in public, on her husband's friend Junot's arm, with halleluias shouted by a hundred thousand voices.

Carnot, completely converted to belief in the man he once doubted, pronounced a harangue in the Champ de Mars, in which he compared Napoleon to Miltiades and to Epaminondas. The poet, Lebrun, wrote a poem and led the chorus of a song, in Bonaparte's honor, who was on the eve of taking Mantua. All France paid homage to Citizeness Bonaparte for the sake of her absent husband.

And yet it can be proved that on the very night when this great demonstration, this almost apotheosis of her husband took place, where she was worshiped as a goddess, this very Josephine passed several hours in the society of a then popular actor, after whom she received a handsome young officer, a M. Charles, a second lieutenant of hussars.

This last mentioned scapegrace was her special favorite. She not only sacrificed to him her own and her husband's honor, but her husband's money. M. Charles, like Josephine herself, was always in pecuniary straits, and he did not hesitate to demand financial aid from the woman who had already given him herself.

Josephine, in short, was false to Napoleon almost from the hour she married him. She was proud of him, of course; no woman in her position could have failed in pride in possessing such a man. She was well aware by this time that he was one of the great men of the world, and was destined to be greater. She knew also, and perhaps, being a woman, this knowledge gave her more delight than all else beside, that every woman now desired Napoleon, and envied her influence over him. Perhaps, to a certain extent too, she was grateful for his kindness to herself and to her children.

But this much is certain: she did not love him as he loved her; she did not constantly desire to be with him as he with her.

Bonaparte longed to have her company during his Italian campaign, but she persistently refused to join him. She ever had excuses in plenty for her refusal.

Her course in this matter at one time came very near defeating itself. Her husband, worn out with fighting and privation, sick of glory, became light-headed and foolish. He talked seriously of throwing up his commission, resigning his command, and living constantly with his Yeyette. If she would not come to him, he would go to her. Many a wife would have been glad to encourage such a plan, preferring her husband's company with peace, to his absence with glory and war. But not so Josephine. In mortal terror that he really might surrender all to come to her, she at last consented to leave Paris and seek him. Of two pressing evils, she chose what seemed to her the less.

This is *not* the view of Josephine's character which has been given to the world by poets, dramatists and novelists, up to date; but it *is* the view which historians and men of research, men who look for facts, not fancy, for truths, not theories, have been forced to adopt. It is the view which will be taken by posterity.

As a rule, Napoleon was not betrayed to such an extent by the men he had benefited as by the women whom he had blessed. He was not deceived in the majority of the marshals whom he loaded with honors and wealth, but in the two women whom he married. These, Josephine and Marie Louise, whom he called from all the millions of their sex, to share his name and his glory, behaved toward him like infamous wretches. Which woman treated him the worse, casuists must decide. Both deceived him, neither even loved him.

On the whole the daughter and descendant of bestial emperors, Marie Louise, of Austria, was the more excusable. *She* did not have the opportunity of knowing the Napoleon whom she married as well as did Josephine. She was not a resident of Paris, she was not a citizen of France, she had not lived in the French capital in the days of the Directory, and watched Napoleon's course; she understood not the man Napoleon. All Marie Louise knew was that Bonaparte had conquered her father, and entered her nuptial chamber as though it were but one of his vanquished cities.

After the Italian campaign, Bonaparte, both victor and peacemaker, returned to Paris, but dreamed of the East.

As before remarked there was much of the oriental in his nature, and to Napoleon at this period of his career, the East was not merely a field for conquest and for glory, but a place for rest. Aye, rest from the intrigues and uncertainties of Paris.

For returning to the gay capital, December 5, 1797, and settling down with delight in the "little house" in the Rue Chantereine, which in his honor had been rechristened to Rue de la Victoire, he began to experience some of the nuisances and some of the dangers of popularity.

He was compelled to be personally present at all military fêtes. He was forced to pose as a hero, he was saluted everywhere he went by a flutter of flags.

In vain he endeavored to free himself from the ovations with which he was constantly pursued. Carnot's place was now vacant at the institute; it was offered to him, and he tried to figure no longer as a warrior, but as a student.

He declined all distinctions and gifts, refused the famous Chateau de Chambord, one of the marvels of the art of the Renaissance.

Finally, seeing that France would accept him as its soldier and its general only, he aimed high, and aspired to the position of commander-in-chief of the French army for the conquest of England.

Great Britain, the traditional enemy of France, had ever been the foe of the revolution and the republic.

But Napoleon did not now propose to attack England direct. He determined to injure his adversary indirectly, but vitally, through her colonies and annexed territories.

And in this scheme he included a gigantic, a poetic, but an impracticable plan for conquering the East—that East which Great Britain was annexing, that East of which he dreamed.

So he planned the campaign in Egypt. It was well for him he did so, in one way. It led him to leave Paris, which would soon have wearied of even Napoleon—in peace.

The mob is fickle and soon tires of hero-worship.

He himself once remarked to a friend, when the crowd were shouting his praises: "Bah! when they shall have seen me three times they won't look at me the fourth."

A conspiracy against him hastened his departure. His enemies who were few in number comparatively, but determined, hinted that he had misused public money in the Italian campaign. Reubell, a weak, but honest politician, took Bonaparte at his word, too, one day, in a rather pointed and unpleasant manner: "I am ready to resign my sword to France." Bonaparte had remarked. "Then resign," said Reubell, handing Napoleon a pen, with which to write his resignation.

He started for the East at last, addressing his troops before they started, with one of those glowing proclamations which were so thoroughly Napoleonic.

Proclamations in which he made his men believe, because he almost believed in them himself.

The campaign in Egypt began with its fabled marches. It was like a tale in the Arabian Nights. On May 19, 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte left Toulon for the orient, but on October 15, 1799, the news reached Paris that he had embarked for his return at Fréjus. France then prepared to receive him as a savior. Paris made ready to welcome him as an almost godlike hero.

The whole country resigned itself, as it were, to his embrace, like the actress when she swoons in the arms of her lover in the play.

But even at this time it is doubtful if he had really in his own mind any fixed plan or design to overturn the existing order of things and make his own will law, as it afterward came to pass.

No, he was a dreamer as well as a man who caused dreams to come true, and he was guided by events.

The 18th Brumaire was commanded by public opinion, though it was executed by Napoleon.

Had Napoleon not attempted the *coup d'etat* on that occasion, Bernadotte, Moreau, or some other general would have essayed it.

Bonaparte prepared for this event; he surrounded himself with a bold and capable staff of assistants, brave warriors like Lannes, Murat, Berthier, Marmont, legislators like Cambacérès, and fishers in the troubled waters of statecraft, like Talleyrand and Fouché. He trusted greatly to his two brothers, Lucien and Joseph, who worked actively in his behalf. Through his precautions he succeeded.

On the 18th Brumaire (November 9, 1799) all parties concerned met at Napoleon's "little house" in the Rue de la Victoire, at six in the morning. The pretense for the meeting was a review.

Only one man on whom Napoleon had confidently counted was absent. This one man was Napoleon's old friend, Lefebvre.

Bonaparte asked for him with ill-concealed anxiety. "Where is Lefebvre?" he inquired of Marmont. "Why is he not with us?"

At that very moment some one announced "General" Lefebvre. For he was now a general in the army—our Lefebvre. He had indeed made great strides onward and upward, this husband of Catherine Sans-Gêne. He was at this moment, in fact, governor of Paris. He had been first guardsman, then lieutenant, then captain, till at last he had risen to be general in charge of the seventeenth military division, which included the French capital.

He became a hero when his comrade Hoche, who likewise rose to the rank of general, was killed. He had conducted the army of Sambre-et-Meuse to victory; he had then commanded the army of the Danube, and would have become a member of the Directory; but he was too much of a soldier, and too much of a republican.

At this crisis, as commander-in-chief of the army of Paris, his aid was absolutely indispensable to Napoleon.

But Napoleon had not fully informed Lefebvre of his plans, who, finding out the night before that military movements were being undertaken without his orders, became indignant, and now sought Napoleon to obtain an explanation.

He was therefore in a bad humor when he entered the room, where the rest were assembled.

Napoleon did not seem to notice this, however, and ran to him, with arms outstretched.

"Ah! my dear old Lefebvre," he cried in his most familiar tone and manner, "how are you? and how is your wife, the good Madame Catherine Sans-Gêne?

Has she still her heart in her hand, and is her tongue as ready as her heart, as ever? My wife, Madame Bonaparte, justly complains that she sees far too little of her."

Napoleon could flatter either man or woman when it was worth his while.

"My wife is well, I thank you, General Bonaparte," replied Lefebvre, still under the spell of his bad humor, though thawing fast; "but that is not the matter at issue."

Napoleon interrupted him. "Look you, my dear old comrade," said the great man, with that tone of affectionate good fellowship which he could so well assume on necessary occasions, "you are one of the main props of the republic; you are not the man to let it fall into the hands of lawyers. Look at this."

He pointed to a magnificent sword he was wearing; a saber with a jeweled hilt.

"This," continued Napoleon, "is the scimitar of the great chief Mourad Bey. It is a sword from the Pyramids, and now," taking the weapon and handing it to Lefebvre, "it is yours. Accept it as a token of my confidence and my esteem."

Lefebvre, though flattered immensely, still hesitated a moment—but only a moment. He began to understand now that a *coup d'etat* was to be undertaken, and as he believed in Napoleon, he would take his side of the affair. And so he took the sword of the Pyramids.

"You are right, General Bonaparte," he said, "let us throw all the lawyers into the river."

This decided the matter. Soon the 18th Brumaire was over, and that day changed once more the destinies of France.

That evening, General Lefebvre, as he embraced his faithful Catherine on his return home, drew from his scabbard Napoleon's gift.

"Look, wife," he said, "it is a Turk's sword, fit only for a parade, or to hit a lawyer over the back. We will leave it in the scabbard, and it will serve us as a reminder of the friendship of General Bonaparte, who began life almost as humbly as we did, my sweet Catherine."

"But, Lefebvre, it is really a fine sword," cried Catherine; "will you not use it, sometimes?"

"No, my Catherine," answered her husband. "I have my own sword to defend my country with, to strike against the Austrians, the Prussians or the English, or to go wherever Bonaparte may choose to lead us. Aye, if it were to fight the very thunder, my own sword will do—my dear old sword with which I led the army of Sambre-et-Meuse; it is good enough, my sweet."

And so saying General Lefebvre, embracing the wife he loved as dearly now, as on that memorable tenth of August, kissed her fervently and tenderly, and the soldier's kiss was as pure and honest as the dear old sword.

BOOK FOURTH.

LA MARECHALE.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MADAME LA MARECHALE TAKES A DANCING LESSON AND—A THUNDERBOLT FALLS.

DISCREETLY and softly the door of a bedchamber at Saint-Cloud was opened, and a maid peeped into the apartment. Then she entered the room and approached a superb mahogany bed, crowned with a coronet from which fell two large flowered curtains.

Gently she called: "Madame la Maréchale! waken! it is ten o'clock."

A decidedly strong yet hoarse voice came from beneath the bedclothes.

"*Ciel!* one can't even sleep in this palace of pasteboard."

"*Pardonnez moi!*" said the maid, "but madame ordered that she should be called at ten o'clock."

"Is it ten already?" cried the voice. "What a lazy wretch I am becoming, to be sure. I was a different woman when I took in washing. I rose early then; and later on, in the regiment beside the canteen, I did not wait for the morning drum-call to sound twice ere I was stirring; but now, since I am

Madame la Maréchale, I cannot bestir myself. Come, Lise; quick, my dressing-gown."

And Madame la Maréchale sprang out of bed, and truth to tell, swore like a trooper because she couldn't find her hosiery.

She was not an easy mistress when she was dressing, being impatient to a degree. Though she was now La Maréchale Lefebvre, she retained all her old looks and ways; all the familiarity of gesture, all the good-fellowship which had distinguished her in the Saint-Roche quarter as laundress, and in the great days of the revolution, in the army of the North, of the Moselle, and of the Sambre-et-Meuse, when she was cantinière, and was known by all as Madame Sans-Gêne.

The course of events had changed the earth, and individual destinies since then.

The little artillery officer had become first consul, and then emperor. He sat on the throne, ablaze with glory, while humbled kings fell prostrate at his feet, and the predictions of the Waux-Hall ball magician had been realized by Lefebvre and his wife. Lefebvre had been the favorite alike of the consul and the emperor, and when Napoleon had restored the old order of marshals of France, he became one of the very first appointed to that rank; he was also a senator. The emperor considered him ignorant but invincible—a man who decided what to do (after he had done it), on the field of battle.

The great leader liked this; it suited him. Napoleon schemed, Lefebvre executed. The emperor was the cannon, he the ball. He commanded Napoleon's pets—the imperial foot-guards, composed of giants.

But Lefebvre was not only a great warrior, but what was more rare, a good husband.

Toward Catherine he was always the same. The change of uniform caused no change of conduct; the medal of the Legion of Honor over his breast altered not the heart within it.

The imperial court laughed a little at such old-fashioned conjugal fidelity, but Napoleon, who pretended publicly to an austerity of morals, congratulated Lefebvre and his wife on the excellent example they set his courtiers.

Still the emperor was annoyed at some of Madame la Maréchale's *sans-gêne* habits. He used to lecture Lefebvre about them. "Listen, Lefebvre," said his majesty, "try to make your wife understand that she need not lift her skirts as if she was jumping a ditch, when she enters the apartments of the empress; tell her, too, not to swear any more, and to pronounce her 'f's' and her 'p's:' and one more suggestion, Lefebvre; are you listening?"

"Yes, sire," answered Lefebvre, and *he was* paying attention. It grieved him, what the emperor said, but he knew there was reason for it.

"Well," continued Napoleon, "your wife is always bandying words with my sisters, especially with Elisa. This must not be; one does not like these eternal bickerings among women."

"Sire," said Lefebvre, defending his wife on this point; "your sisters reproach my wife and myself with being republicans; yet are we not still republicans, you and I?"

He asked this question with a triumphant air. Like most of the soldiers of '92, he fancied that he was still serving the republic by serving the emperor.

Napoleon smiled slightly, then continued: "So my old comrade and friend, do ask your wife, for me, not to quarrel any more with my sisters."

"Sire," said Lefebvre, "I shall repeat your majesty's remarks to my wife; she will remember them."

"If she *can*," supplemented the emperor; "I do not demand what is impossible—early habits will cling." Then he said, as if to himself, "What folly for a man to marry when he is a sergeant. Yet I made almost the very same mistake myself; but after all there is a remedy," his voice sank to a whisper, heard by himself alone, "divorce."

As if to distract his thoughts he drew from a pocket in his white waistcoat an oval snuff-box, and inhaled the odor of its contents. That was the imperial method of taking snuff; the emperor never smoked.

Suddenly he retraced his steps to Lefebvre. "Your wife should take lessons of Despréaux," he said, and said no more.

Lefebvre at once sought this Despréaux, the dancing master, *par excellence*, of the imperial court. What a personage he was! small, slender, graceful, perfumed and powdered he had danced through "the times of the Terror," as though they were balls; and when the revolution was over he became quite a personage.

Now this dancing master had made an appointment to call on Madame la Maréchale at ten this morning. Hence the maid's awakening, and Catherine's haste.

When once awake—when at last fully dressed, Catherine entered her salon, she found Despréaux bowing before a mirror, and limbering his joints.

Even court dancing masters' limbs grow stiffer as they grow older.

"Ah! there you are, professor," cried Catherine; "and how is your good health?" she asked, good-humoredly and bluntly. She seized him by the hand (he had never dreamed of extending his own, it would not have been "etiquette"), and she shook hands heartily.

The dancing master had been interrupted while he was practicing before the mirror the second movement of his very best bow, and he didn't like it. He blushed, he stammered, he looked down, he took away his hand from la Maréchale's grip, readjusted his cuffs, disordered somewhat by her too earnest greeting, and said dryly: "I have the honor to await the orders of Madame la Maréchale."

"Well, little one," said Sans-Gêne, heedless of "the professor's" fussiness, and leaning with her fair plump arms on the edge of the table, "the case stands that I have sent for you because the emperor wants me to—his majesty thinks we haven't got manners enough for his court—he wants us to get some manners. In short, you know what he wants, old boy."

Old boy! The professor looked and felt as if he was about to faint.

Old boy! The poor fellow could have expired on the spot. In a weak voice, choked by emotion, he managed to say: "Madame, his majesty is right in desiring that his courtiers should acquire distinction, polish and elegance, as becomes a court. I am proud to be the humble interpreter of his wishes. May I ask, Madame la Maréchale, *what* you wish to learn of the great art I teach, that you may please his majesty?"

"*What* do I wish," said Catherine. "Aye, that's just the very point, my lad!"

The professor winced.

Catherine continued: "But as there's to be a great ball at the palace next Tuesday, when they are to dance the gavotte, I guess it must be *that*. Though, on my life," she added, "why they should want the gavotte I can't guess, for they tell me it was danced in the times of the tyrants. But if the emperor wishes me to dance the gavotte, let me have it. You deal in the article it seems, so hand—or foot it over."

The "professor" at this free and easy style of address nearly had a fit, but he found strength to say with some earnestness:

"Madame la Maréchale, the gavotte is a difficult dance, and it needs inclination—yes, inspiration. Perhaps," he added, with pretended modesty, "I may not be qualified to teach it to you, though I had the honor of instructing Madame the Dauphiness, with whom it was a special favorite."

"Well, we can't do more or less than try anyway," cried Catherine carelessly. "To tell the truth," she added in a confidential tone, "if it was *only the emperor* I wouldn't bother. He didn't care whether I knew how to dance the gavotte or not when I washed his clothes; but it is Lefebvre has asked me also, and that alters the matter, my boy."

The professor felt the faint feeling once again.

Catherine continued: "And as whatever my husband wishes, I wish; why, here goes. You see, Lefebvre and I are like two fingers on the same hand, and we let all the princes and princesses who choose, laugh at us because we keep our marriage vows. But come, my good man."

(One more fluttering of the professor's heart, one more attack of "nerves.")

"I am ready for the gavotte. Say, where do I put my feet?"

And Sans-Gêne tapped the floor twice with her well-shaped though large-sized foot, as if she were executing a military call to arms.

The dancing master, almost by this time reduced to a state of collapse, shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"Oh! these vulgar times!" he thought, "when an aristocratic dancing master has to try to teach good manners to cantinières, and the gavotte to laundresses."

Mustering up courage, he asked Catherine a question:

"Madame, have you ever danced?"

"*Mille tonnaire!* hear the man!" she exclaimed.

"Have I ever danced? I should say I have. Long, and long ago."

"Where, madame?"

"At the Waux-Hall."

"The Waux-Hall? I do not even know the place, madame."

"Worse luck for you then, monsieur."

"What did Madame dance at—ye—ye—ye Waux-Hall? Did she dance the pavané, or the trénitz, the monaco or the minuet?"

"No, monsieur, I never even heard of them. *I* danced *la fricassée.*"

The professor shuddered. He *had* heard of the fricassée.

"It is a dance for porters and for—laundresses," he muttered.

"I was a laundress when I danced it," said she. "I danced it with Lefebvre the night I first met him."

And she smiled sweetly at the recollection.

The professor of elegance shook his little head with a mournful air. "Upon what evil days I have fallen," he said to himself. "I, the dancing master of Madame the Dauphiness," and then he turned to Madame Sans-Gêne, as sadly as if he was going to a funeral, and prepared to teach her the rudimentary elements of that great dance, which Napoleon wished to introduce among the festivities of his court.

In obedience to the instructions of the professor, Madame Catherine did her best to extend her arms this way, to turn and bend that way; to draw her foot back, and to put it forward in time with the arietta from Paësiello, which Despréaux played upon his little violin.

There might reasonably be some difference of opinion as to the way she danced, but there could be but one opinion as to the way she worked. She did everything she did at all, conscientiously, our Madame Sans-Gêne, but she really felt like yawning, and like laughing both at the professor and herself; she kept as grave as an owl, however. "But this is worse than working," she said to herself.

Suddenly the door was pushed open almost rudely, and Lefebvre rushed in.

He was in full uniform; he wore all his insignia of rank. In his hand he held his great plumed hat, across his breast sparkled the badge of the Legion of Honor, and across his uniform, with its gold embroidery, he wore the red sash betokening his rank.

He looked grand, but he was terribly excited.

"Aha!" he shouted as he strode, or rather staggered like one drunk, into the room. "*Vive l'Empereur!*" and he hurled his hat upon the floor.

Then he darted at his wife, who stopped her attempts at dancing, much relieved at the chance to do so. He kissed her, he hugged her, he held her close.

"What in the name of heaven has happened, Lefebvre?" asked Catherine, returning the embrace.

The poor professor, who now found that he couldn't have even one uninterrupted chance to teach his not refractory but reluctant pupil, and who was now forced to spoil his very best bow, which he had been trying his best to impress on madame, advanced quickly to Lefebvre in great anxiety. "Monsieur le Maréchal, is the emperor dead?" he asked.

He could imagine no less an event to account for the marshal's extraordinary behavior.

Lefebvre's only reply was a kick—a vigorous kick. It struck the professor in the back, and made him squirm, and forced him to pirouette in a very undignified and unartistic fashion.

But the dancing master, after all, was a thoroughbred in his line. He recovered his pose quickly, saluted Lefebvre as though he had just been shaking hands with him, and getting off that "best bow" which had just been interrupted, he asked blandly: "Did Monsieur le Maréchal *speak?*"

"Come, Lefebvre, calm yourself," said his wife, herself somewhat astonished at her husband's behavior; "do tell us what has happened. Monsieur Despréaux asks if the emperor is dead. That is impossible I know, but——"

"No, of course," interrupted Lefebvre, "the emperor is not dead; he cannot die, our emperor. That, as you say, Catherine, is impossible, the emperor will never die; but it is something else. *We* are to go, we are to leave here at once, just as we have begun to feel settled here."

"Go! and where to, my husband? I mean," she added, looking comically at the court dancing master, "Monsieur le Maréchal."

"I don't exactly know where," replied Lefebvre, looking distressed and bothered, "but somewhere. It is absolutely necessary for us to go somewhere and quickly. I believe," he added, "we are to go to—Berlin."

"Is Berlin far off?" asked our simple Catherine, who was not as well versed as she might have been in geography.

"I really don't know myself," answered honest Lefebvre, telling a white lie that he might not appear to be wiser than his wife. "But," he added, with an air of the most profound conviction, "nothing is 'far' to the emperor."

"And how soon must we start—next week?" she asked.

"Next week, indeed," he answered; "no, but to-morrow."

"Impossible! so soon," she exclaimed.

"Impossible?" said Lefebvre, "you know the emperor insists that 'impossible' is not a *French* word. But really, Catherine, the emperor is in a hurry, even for *him*. You see, the Prussians are in arms against us, though we have never injured them; but there is no glory to be gained by routing Prussians."

"*Pardonnez moi!* monsieur," interrupted the little dancing master, widening the distance between the marshal's boot and his own body; "Frederick the Great was a Prussian."

"Don't know or care anything about him," said Lefebvre calmly.

"But, Lefebvre, can't I go with you, dear?" asked his wife.

"If you like," answered the loving husband, "that is, as far as the frontier; the emperor is going to take the empress. It is simply a walk over to Berlin in uniform. Still, as far as my comfort goes, Catherine, I must confess I would rather have remained where we are. The whole thing is so sudden, you know. It is as if a thunderbolt falls from a clear sky; but let us set to work about our departure. Have you seen Henriot?"

"He is waiting for you, Lefebvre, as you ordered."

"All right, Catherine, bring him here, I shall present him to the emperor; perhaps this new movement may advance him."

Catherine rose to bring in Henriot, and Despréaux gallantly rose to offer his services. He rushed to open the door for madame.

"*Permittez moi!*" he said, with a flourish. He had no time to say more, for once again Lefebvre gave him a kick, harder than the first. "You idiot," growled the marshal, "we are military folk here; no frills or backbreaking, you little acrobat."

The poor professor disappeared hastily, rubbing himself and cursing the vulgar times and people he had come across—he who had taught the principles and practices of stately courtesy to Madame the Dauphiness.

Soon Catherine returned with "little Henriot," now a young man, and a sub-lieutenant, eager to fight for France if Napoleon permitted. "But," as Lefebvre remarked, "it was not such an easy thing to be allowed even to die for the emperor." But Catherine determined to see the Empress Josephine, and ask her to use her influence to allow Henriot to accompany the army to Berlin. "I will ask her this very day; there is to be a review of the imperial guard," said Catherine.

It was the close of September, 1806; the French empire then comprised two-thirds of Europe. Napoleon sat on a throne constructed of trophies and standards, from which he ruled not only peoples but kings. All the members of his family occupied exalted stations, yet not one of them was satisfied, and his sisters were always jealous of each other.

"It would really seem," Napoleon once remarked, "as though they thought I had defrauded them of their inheritance from the late king, our father."

The review took place, and Napoleon inspected his soldiers with even more than his usual care. He noticed specially the drum major of the grenadiers, tall, straight, yet boyish looking.

"Your name?" he asked, of the drum major.

"La Violette, sire," answered the young giant in a soft voice.

"Where have you served?"

"Everywhere, sire."

"*Très bien!*" said the emperor, who liked short answers. "Do you know Berlin?"

"No, sire."

"Would you like to go there?"

"I would like to go, sire, wherever my emperor wishes."

"Well said, La Violette; get ready your drum and drumsticks. In a month from to-day you shall be the first Frenchman to enter the Prussian capital. But how tall you are—tall as a poplar."

"And you, sire, are as tall as the whole world."

The emperor smiled; he liked compliments. La Violette's fortune was assured.

When the drums ceased to beat that morning a great shout arose from that forest of men, strong as oaks, many of them destined never to return from that Berlin to which their master, "the butcher of Europe" was about to lead them.

"*Vive l'Empereur!*"

"I believe my cousin, the king of Prussia, will soon be sorry he provoked my wrath," said Napoleon to Lefebvre. "With such men I might war against the Almighty and his archangels. Embrace your wife, marshal; we leave to-night."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SECRET SOCIETY OF LA RUE BOURG L'ABBE—THE PLAN OF LEONIDAS—LEFEBVRE TRIES TO UNDERSTAND—THE ENTRY INTO BERLIN.

In the center of Paris, in the Rue Bourg l'Abbé, peopled by a colony of laborers in single rooms, on the night of the day when Napoleon reviewed his troops at Saint-Cloud, seven or eight men were assembled in a cabinet-maker's shop secretly; and eight or ten more joined them later on, each man taking the utmost precautions to avoid being seen entering.

Major Marcel, already introduced to our readers, presided over the meeting, which was held by the secret society, the Philadelphes, founded by Colonel

Joseph Oudet, which embraced not only republicans but royalists, not only Frenchmen but foreigners.

This society was based on and called after a society in Philadelphia, United States, and extended all over Europe. The members took the names of the great men of ancient times; Aristotle, Socrates, etc.; and their emblem was a star—like that of the Legion of Honor.

The society was at this time an association of conspirators who had resolved to assassinate Napoleon. And they were now addressed by a new arrival, a "patriot," who was called Leonidas, a stranger, but introduced to the society by the chairman, Marcel.

This individual began by vehemently, passionately abusing Napoleon, and recommending his "removal" as the only cure for the evils he had caused, justifying assassination as "the supreme recourse."

His views were vehemently applauded, and it was resolved to "execute" the emperor in the name and in the behalf of the "liberty" he had abused.

In the midst of the proceedings Marcel's constant companion, Renée, gave the alarm. The agents of the secret police, headed by Dubois and Fouché, were at the door.

But the Philadelphes were prepared for this contingency. The floor of the room in which they assembled had a well-concealed trapdoor, which led down to an entrance into a side street. They fled, but Leonidas, whose real name was General Malus, was among the last to leave.

When the police burst open the door they found an empty room.

The emperor was winning glory abroad, but he had to pay its price; he had enemies to the death at home.

The war against Prussia had now commenced in earnest. For this conflict Prussia was *not* prepared, whereas France *was*. The result was simple enough; Napoleon covered himself and his army with glory.

And amid the emperor's followers marched La Violette.

Napoleon met him one day, and recognized him. The great man had the rare faculty of remembering faces and names. "Ah!" said the Man of Destiny to the tall gawk of a drum major, "you are La Violette."

"Yes, sire, on the route to Berlin, by your majesty's orders."

"*Bien!* drum major, I adhere to my promise; you shall be the first man to enter Berlin."

"Sire!" cried La Violettte, sadly, "I shall not be able to take with me all my prisoners."

"Thy *prisoners! what* prisoners?" Napoleon asked, amazed.

"Oh, the prisoners I captured myself, sire; there they all are," pointing as he spoke to a hut near by. "I have shut the door on them, and I am keeping guard."

It was a fact; La Violette spoke the truth. He had managed to take, while off their guard and by deceiving them as to the *number* of their antagonists, and by depriving them of their weapons, to keep a number of prisoners. He had done all this alone, unaided.

Napoleon rode up to the big, boyish drum major.

"Who gave *you* authority to take prisoners of war?" he cried "Ah, *bien!* wait a little, I will pay you their ransom."

And he presented La Violette on the spot with the cross of the Legion of Honor.

"Ah!" said La Violette to himself, after a moment's profound thought, "after all I am not a coward, even by daylight. This cross here proves it."

On October 8, a French army under Murat began firing upon Schleitz.

On the 10th an engagement took place at Saalfield, where Prince Louis of Prussia fell, and from whence Marshal Lannes marched on to Jena. And on October 13, Napoleon himself arrived at Jena in person. From his headquarters he sent Rapp, his aide-de-camp, to find Marshal Lefebvre.

The latter soon arrived and entered quietly, his uniform torn, and the gilt on his coat all black with gunpowder.

Napoleon shook his hand. "Well, dear old Lefebvre," he said, "we have made a good thing of this; is it not so?"

"Sire," said Lefebvre, "with you and with my men, we could always do well.

"Ah! sire," he continued, "you gave me long ago a saber from the Pyramids; you would not do ill to give me another, the old one is used up. See, it is like a corkscrew."

"Well, Lefebvre, in place of your sword you shall have a rapier. But," pointing to a chart on a table in his tent, the emperor said to his marshal: "That is a fine piece of work."

"Ah, indeed," remarked Lefebvre. He knew and cared no more about charts than he did about Sanskrit.

"It is a plan of the town of Dantzig," continued the emperor.

"Indeed, I do not know anything about Dantzig, sire," said the marshal. He had little faith in drawings on paper; he believed only in fighting in person.

"Well, you must learn everything about it, my dear Lefebvre," said the emperor. "It is the most important commercial point on the Vistula. I will need the town as a base of supplies when we go to fight the Russians. It is strongly fortified, and is impregnable. Nobody can take it; *that* is therefore the very reason why I give it to *you* to take."

Lefebvre became all animation *now*. "Ah, I see, I *must* take it," he cried; "then, sire, I *will* take it, with my grenadiers, of course."

"No," said Napoleon, "but with *this*," pointing to the chart. "How stupid you are, Lefebvre, almost as dull as you are brave."

But after awhile the marshal began to understand.

"Ah, I shall write to my wife and tell her how kind you have been to me again—about this Dantzig, sire," he said gratefully.

"Your wife, Sans-Gêne," said Napoleon, rather disdainfully, "you still think as much as ever of your wife, eh, Lefebvre?"

"More, sire, if possible," replied the marshal. "Catherine and I love like a pair of children. We are the same lovers to-day as when I was laundress and she was sergeant—I mean when I was sergeant and she was laundress, before we dreamed—— Oh, sire, I only know and love three things: my emperor, my flag, my wife—but these three are enough."

"It is as it should be, Lefebvre," said the emperor, not pursuing the subject of his wife any further. "When you have taken Dantzig I shall bestow a new favor on the former laundress whom you continue to love so well. But now we must both to our business—on to Berlin."

And on the 27th of October, 1806, Berlin was the center of a glorious spectacle. Like the legions of old Rome, the armies of new France made the entry into the conquered capital, and La Violette was at the head.

It was a great day for France and for La Violette. He made a speech on the sidewalk to the crowd.

"Listen to me, children of Berlin," he squeaked. "France is the one finest country in the world; the army is the one best thing in France; the first regiment of grenadiers is the best thing in the French army; and I am, all things considered, the best man in the first regiment of grenadiers. Look therefore upon me, children of Prussia, *regardez moi bien, mes enfants;* you are looking at the greatest man on earth, save one, the emperor. *Vive l'empereur!*" And then he strutted off, saying to himself, with a sigh: "Oh! if Catherine Sans-Gêne were but here. Oh! if only Madame la Maréchale could but see me now!"

Napoleon, having conquered Berlin, governed it. He maintained discipline in the army, he protected the citizens, and he acted liberally toward the Prince de Hatzfeld, the burgomaster of Berlin. He respected the latter's office, only exacting a parole of honor from the prince that he would do naught to interfere with France or the French while in office. The prince accepted Napoleon's conditions, and Berlin was for the time being, like Paris, a French capital.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PROMOTION OF HENRIOT—THE PAROLE OF A PRUSSIAN—THE LOVES OF NAPOLEON AND THE SECRET OF JOSEPHINE—MONSIEUR LE DUC DE DANTZIG.

At the very first opportunity Marshal Lefebvre presented to his emperor his adopted son, Henriot.

Napoleon eyed the youth profoundly; he seemed to like his looks.

"I adopted the boy upon the field of battle, sire," said Lefebvre, "at Jemmapes."

"Ah!" said the soldier-emperor to Lefebvre, "that was a fine battle, that Jemmapes. A good debut for you, young lieutenant," remarked Napoleon to young Henriot.

"In what regiment did you say, sire?" asked Henriot quickly.

The emperor smiled; he liked people to be bright, keen, quick. He became interested in young Henriot for his own sake as well as for his adopted father's; he listened to his story. After all, Henriot had already had his adventures, and had acquitted himself well. In one affair at Stettin he had behaved most bravely. The emperor heard of it now and was charmed at the recital. He congratulated the lad on his courage; he congratulated Lefebvre on having adopted such a son. He appointed the young warrior to a high command upon the spot; he bestowed upon him every mark of honor. Lefebvre and Henriot were in the seventh heaven of delight and adoration.

As father and son walked to their quarters along the streets of Berlin in joyous mood, they passed the palace where resided the Prince de Hatzfeld. Here Lefebvre paused; he had a surprise in store for Henriot.

"Do you remember your little playmate, Alice?" he asked of Henriot, who started, then blushed.

"Well, she lives here; she has been taken care of in her loneliness and poverty by the Princess de Hatzfeld, who was a friend of the Beaurepaires; she is with her in that house, at this moment," said Lefebvre.

"Alice here! what happiness!" cried Henriot.

"Yes," said Lefebvre; "she saw us, when we entered Berlin; spoke to the princess about us; and so we are invited to dine to-day at the Hatzfeld palace. You will not be sorry to see her at dinner, I take it."

Henriot was overjoyed to renew his acquaintance with his former young playfellow. In his heart he felt he loved her as dearly as when they played together in the canteen wagon.

The discovery of her presence here was even more to this true-hearted young soldier than his own recent promotion.

The two men, father and son, called at the municipal palace and were kindly received by Madame la Princesse de Hatzfeld.

But the prince himself was silent and morose, though keenly watchful.

Henriot, however, heeded not the affability of the one, nor the almost repellent reserve of the other; he had only eyes and ears for Alice, who was as glad apparently to see him once more, as he was to feast his sight upon her again.

Old associations are the strongest of all earthly ties; so altogether independent of their own youth and good looks, they were attracted irresistibly unto each other.

In talking and recalling the past they soon forgot the lapse of time, but suddenly Lefebvre, who felt it necessary to make his preparations to leave for Dantzig at once, as the emperor had ordered, took his departure. He was followed by young Henriot who, however, in bidding adieu to Alice, imprudently disclosed Lefebvre's present plans, and hinted at going to Dantzig. The Prince de Hatzfeld watched the young lovers closely, and caught their conversation. He even played the eavesdropper, and was caught by Henriot on going out, listening behind the door.

The Prussian prince was aware that the French emperor dealt largely in "surprises" which always heralded some important political or military movement. He felt convinced that it was some "surprise" which had called away the marshal and his adopted son so early from this dinner party—some surprise which betokened some military maneuver against his countrymen, the Prussians.

So forgetting, in his anxiety about his own people, the parole of honor he had given to the French emperor not to interfere in any political or military matter, the Prince de Hatzfeld having listened and discovered that plans were on foot for the capture of Dantzig, sent word by letter to the Prussians of this step in contemplation, thus putting them on their guard.

The news sent by the prince would have indeed been invaluable to the Prussians had they received it. But they did not, for Henriot having told Lefebvre how he had caught the prince listening, the message was intercepted by Lefebvre's scouts, and the prince himself was arrested and condemned for treason against the French, and for violating his parole of honor, to instant death. But the Princess de Hatzfeld so strongly enlisted the feelings of her *protegée* and ward, Alice, and Alice so strongly enlisted the feelings of her new-found comrade and lover, and Henriot so earnestly entreated the good offices of his stepfather, Lefebvre, that Napoleon was at last with great difficulty induced to yield to their triple pleas for clemency, and to remit the death sentence—an act of noble clemency which forms a bright page in his history.

Dantzig itself, Dantzig long considered "the impregnable," was taken at last by the man to whom Napoleon had entrusted the apparently impossible task, Marshal Lefebvre, and after the capture of the town, the marshal was made happy by the coming of his wife to visit him, an event which really gave him more delight than the taking of the town.

Catherine came to Dantzig first to see her husband, but she also had another motive of the most delicate nature.

The Empress Josephine, though fully aware by this time of her great husband's love, was also well aware that she had many enemies—Fouché, chief of Napoleon's secret police, among the number—and that one strong point with her foes was that she had given the emperor no heir.

Her daughter Hortense had given birth to a bright boy, Napoleon Charles, whom Napoleon intended, if he could do no better, to adopt as his successor. But this child had died, and Josephine was in despair thereat until she ascertained that one of the ladies of her court who had been one of Napoleon's sub-rosa paramours, had given birth to a son who was the very image of his imperial parent. This unwedded mother's name was Mlle. Elénore, an elegant brunette, with magnificent eyes. Josephine had for years been aware of her husband's occasional lapses from conjugal morality, but being also aware that *she* really was the only woman who had, as yet, any hold upon his affections, and knowing that her childlessness removed from her the right of complaint, had submitted to this state of affairs. She even was willing now to avail herself of this, her rival's child, and to present him as her own, with Napoleon's consent. And it was to interview the emperor on this delicate point that Catherine, la Maréchale Lefebvre, had on this occasion ostensibly visited her lord and master.

She, of course, revealed her mission to her husband, who sympathized with Josephine in her predicament. "Oh," he said, "if *science* could only give the emperor a son."

"But science *can't*," said Catherine. "It takes more than *doctors* to give the emperor a successor, and even the doctors, in this case, seem to have lost their skill. But," continued Catherine, "at least the empress has done all *she* can, she is beyond suspicion, though not reproach. She has not only loved her husband, but she has consulted all sorts of people, fortune tellers and sorcerers, demanding some remedy, some elixir, some drug, some something or anything that will make her a mother. She has taken the waters at Luxeuil and Plombières which are reputed to have the power to produce maternity. But all in vain."

"Well, *I* can vouch," said Lebefvre, "that the emperor has done all he can do to become a father, at home or elsewhere. But none of his ladies, little Fourés, for example, Belliote, his pretty companion in Egypt, Signora Granini, Mlle. George, his court ladies of honor, none of these have brought any heir to Napoleon, though they were all very willing, for the sake of their own importance; but none of them has ever charged him with being a father."

"And meanwhile," said Catherine, "his brother Lucien and Talleyrand advise the emperor to get a divorce and marry some European princess. The empress knows this and so she has sent me to see how the emperor feels about it."

Lefebvre did not like the task that Catherine had undertaken, but as she had promised, of course, she must keep her word.

Catherine, we may be sure, fulfilled her mission with all possible rapidity and honesty, and discharged her task as probably no other woman in the world could. But even *she* was not as successful as Josephine expected, or rather hoped. Napoleon on his side had his own secrets. He had been somewhat weaned by his various mistresses from his originally violent, passionate love for Josephine.

Various books and papers have been written by men and women by the Duchess D'Abrantes, De Bourienne, etc., on the loves of Napoleon, meaning his illicit loves; but no author or authoress has ever done the subject justice.

The fact is that Napoleon, though passionate, was never constant, and for years he had been merely the dearest, kindest, tenderest friend to, and partner of, Josephine—no more. The wild delirium of his early married life had subsided, and he had sought temporary distractions to divert his thoughts from a childless home.

Josephine's early escapades during his campaign in Italy had been reported to him by her enemies at court; and Fouché, always opposed to her, had on several occasions suggested divorce, but it was really her and his *childlessness* which had rendered Bonaparte unfaithful.

The list of Napoleon's loves is long and interesting. First, during his campaign in Italy, he carried on an intrigue with a Madame Turrau, the wife of an adherent of his cause, whom he afterward rewarded for his convenient blindness by an office.

Then in his Egyptian campaign, he met at Cairo (while at a ball given at the Tivoli, a garden like the Waux-Hall), a Parisian modiste, a woman by the name of Marguerite Pauline Belliote, who had married a man named Fourés. She was a petite, pretty, vivacious blonde, who had for awhile worn male costume, and looked bewitching as a man.

Napoleon became captivated, and having finally overcome her scruples, he sent her husband back to France, "on a political mission of great importance," and then giving a dinner in her honor, installed her in state as his mistress.

The husband returning from his "mission" too soon, saw how he had been deceived and applied for a divorce. Bonaparte seriously loved this woman and promised her if she had a child, to marry her and divorce himself from Josephine, but she was never able to claim this promise. He always provided for her well, however, but in the end she proved alike unfaithful and ungrateful.

His next "affair" was with Granini, the opera singer, who afterward (such are the strange vicissitudes and transformation scenes of fate), became the mistress of Napoleon's conqueror, the Duke of Wellington.

Then he made love *en passant* to Mlle. Brancha, of the opera, Paris; Mlle. Bourgeois, the dancer; and Mlle. George, the famous actress, who remained always his friend and admirer.

And in course of time, after many palace intrigues, he established personal relations with the famous, or infamous, adventuress, Madame de Vauday.

She was at that time one of the ladies of honor attendant on Josephine; she "bled" Napoleon freely.

One night she sent him a despairing note, stating that she needed a large sum of money, and as she did not dare to hope that her needs could be supplied, she had resolved to kill herself.

The emperor at once sent her the sum she "needed" and a love message with it, but she never got the money, for the faithful aide-de-camp by whom he sent it, came back and reported that he had found the despairing, desperate, would-be suicide giving a sumptuous dinner party to some gentlemen friends at her cozy retreat, which Napoleon was paying for, at Auteuil.

Among Josephine's maids there was a Mlle. Felicité Lacorte, who shared with her mistress the emperor's favors. Likewise a "reader" by the name of Gazzoni, and a "writer" by the name of Suillebeau. The last mentioned lady lost her "position" through a letter her mother sent to her, but which fell into the emperor's hands. The letter simply told the one it was addressed to, to make hay while the sun shone, as it never shone very long.

Finally there came upon the scene, "the true mistress" of his heart, and the woman who loved him truly, the Countess Walewski, known all over Europe as "the beautiful Pole." This woman was a sincere patriot; had married a Polish count of seventy years in preference to one of the Russian oppressors of her country of only twenty five years, and fell in love with Napoleon, as much on account of his war with Russia, as for himself.

She became his mistress from patriotism, but continued the relation from affection. She bore him a son (afterward Count Walewski of the second empire) and remained faithful till the last.

No wonder that with all these distractions, his love for Josephine had waned, no wonder that for the sake of an heir he was willing to divorce a wife.

Yes, Catherine's mission was *not* an unqualified success.

But she managed to have her usual complement of adventures nevertheless. The young Henriot in one of his expeditions had been taken prisoner by the Prussians beyond Berlin, and under such circumstances that he was justly, under the laws of war, liable to death as a spy. Lefebvre was, of course, distracted at the news. Alice was wild with grief and fear, but Catherine determined "to go and do something," as she expressed it. "I will get the boy free," she said, "if I have to see his own real father to do it," and she kept her word. Lefebvre himself, who, though he loved and missed the young Henriot much, loved and would miss his wife much more, in vain endeavored to dissuade her from her purpose. Catherine could be as obstinate as a mule when she chose, and she chose this time. Accompanied by the ever-faithful and more than ever valiant La Violette, Catherine secretly left the French lines and penetrated into the very heart of the Prussian camp.

There she, with infinite care and difficulty, saw Henriot himself. There she met and recalled herself to the youthful and unhappy Alice, and there, above all, she met for the third time in their eventful careers, with the Count de Neipperg, who, by the irony of fate, had the control of Henriot's destiny, and had doomed him to perish as a spy.

In vain Catherine pleaded for the young man's life, in vain she demanded his safety as a return for her own past services to De Neipperg. The Austrian nobleman reluctantly was compelled from a sense of duty to his country, to refuse her request.

Then Catherine at last fell back upon her secret and human nature. She revealed to De Neipperg the fact that this Henriot whom he was to shoot as a spy, was his own and Blanche's child.

De Neipperg denied this at first, insisted that "little Henriot" had been long dead and buried, having been blown up by a powder explosion in the ruins of the baron's chateau near Jemmapes, after the battle, but Catherine soon convinced him that he was under a mistake, and that she had rescued, adopted, and reared the deserted child, whom he was about to kill.

And then De Neipperg naturally became as determined to save the young man as he had been to destroy him.

He saw his child, revealed his relationship, and gratified for the moment his paternal love. But, alas! a new complication now arose.

De Neipperg had conceived the idea of saving Henriot without violating the rules of war, by claiming him as an Austrian subject, as he really was, from one point of view—his father being an Austrian.

But young Henriot's high sense of honor, and the love that he had been taught to feel for France here interfered. "I am not, I cannot be a German," he insisted, "for I have not only a French heart, but I was born on French soil. Besides, the only father and mother I have ever known are French; so as a Frenchman I have lived, a Frenchman I will die."

All attempts to change this determination were in vain, and to the intense grief of his father, Count de Neipperg, his sweetheart, Alice, his friends, the De Hatzfelds, and his foster-mother, Catherine, the young man would have been shot as a French spy by the Prussians, had not the Prussians in the nick of time been routed and captured by the French (and La Violette) under Marshal Lefebvre, the hero of Dantzig.

On the 26th of May, Marshal Lefebvre made his official entry into Dantzig. He had invited his two colleagues, Marshal Lannes and Marshal Mortier to ride beside him, and share his honors, but both refused on the ground that Lefebvre having done all the work was entitled to all the glory.

The moral and material results of the capture of Dantzig were alike immensely important.

Two days after Lefebvre's entry into the town Napoleon visited the place. He gave a dinner to his generals and placed Lefebvre at his right hand at the banquet.

While Lannes, Mortier and the other high officers awaited the emperor, Grand Marshal Duroc entered bearing a sword, the hilt of which fairly blazed with diamonds. With him came an officer carrying a coronet on a cushion.

During the dinner the emperor asked Duroc to "request the Duke of Dantzig to kneel and receive the investiture."

All eyes turned to Lefebvre, who himself looked all around him to see this Duke of Dantzig, of whom he had not yet heard.

Duroc whispered to Lefebvre, "Kneel."

Then the truth dawned on the brave, but modest man.

He was to be the Duke of Dantzig, the coronet and jeweled sword were his.

His emperor, after honoring, embraced him.

But Lefebvre seemed anxious to *eat*. "Are you so hungry?" asked Duroc. "No," replied the new duke, "but you know, the sooner the emperor lets us dine, the sooner I can gratify my wild desire to be the first to embrace and congratulate the *Duchess* of Dantzig."

BOOK FIFTH.

MADAME LA DUCHESSE.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SALON OF AN EMPRESS AND THE REVENGE OF CATHERINE SANS-GENE.

THE emperor was expected at the French capital.

Victorious, master of Europe, having forced his will on even Russia, and his friendship on even Prussia, he returned to his adoring Paris.

Meanwhile a State function had been arranged in honor of the new Duchess de Dantzig, and all the little world of great people was talking about it.

The great people really wondered how the new duchess would take to her rank.

There where many evil-disposed individuals each with a tongue. Some sneered at her, as an ex-laundress; but many of those who sneered had once been quite as humble, although not quite as spotless.

The good Catherine's reputation was stainless; all that people could do was to laugh at her for loving her husband. As for Lefebvre they laughed at him, too, for being a good husband.

Though he adored Napoleon, he had never imitated the example of his idol in one point—he had never deceived his wife.

"I follow the emperor in all but *that*," he said.

"Look you, *mes amis*," he once remarked to his officers, "if I were to deceive my Catherine, I could not conquer the Prussians. I would be fighting my remorse instead. One must have a whole heart and a clear conscience to fight one to twenty."

Catherine, la Duchesse de Dantzig, was late at the reception given in her honor by the empress. She found Napoleon's two sisters quarreling. Caroline Bonaparte was a queen—the queen of Naples—Elisa, from Saint-Cyr, was only a duchess. So the queen scorned and snubbed the duchess, and the duchess envied and abused the queen.

But while the sisters were bandying words, Catherine's husband was taking breakfast with the emperor.

Napoleon really loved Lefebvre. He needed and valued fidelity above all things, and he knew that Lefebvre was as faithful as he was brave. He also knew that Lefebvre was poor; he resolved to make him rich.

He asked suddenly at table: "Do you like chocolate?"

"Yes, sire," answered the new duke, somewhat surprised; "that is, if you like it."

"Oh," said the emperor, "I am very fond of *Dantzig* chocolate; I will give you some. Here it is," handing him a little package, "you ought to have some of the products of the town you conquered. Accept this package. Such little gifts prove friendship."

Lefebvre carelessly put the "little gift" in his pocket. "Thank you, sire," he said; then added, "They say chocolate is good for the sick; I'll send it to some hospital."

"No," said Napoleon smiling, "I particularly request that you keep it for yourself."

Lefebvre bowed, but wonderingly said to himself:

"How odd to give me chocolate, like a bon-bon to a girl." But he understood the emperor's meaning better in an hour or two.

That little package of so-called "Dantzig chocolate" was of satin paper, containing banknotes for three hundred thousand francs, the emperor's gift to the new duke to sustain his rank.

As for the new duchess, she was trying to hold her own at the empress' reception that morning.

She was in all the splendor (to her "horrors") of "full dress."

White ostrich plumes were in her headgear; she wore her ducal coronet; her trailing skirt and long cloak of sky-blue velvet were magnificent. And yet in all her glory, she felt timid, she blushed.

Yes, for once in her life, and for the very proudest moment in it, Catherine Sans-Gêne did not deserve her sobriquet; she was abashed, she *did* "care."

She had sent for little Despréaux once more, and he had "coached" her in acting as a duchess; but as she entered the salon the pompous little usher, forgetting her new dignity, had announced her by her former title as "Madame la Maréchale Lefebvre."

"The stupid," murmured Catherine, "he is like me, he does not know his part."

The empress advanced to meet her, and by this time the Duchess of Dantzig was herself again.

And when the empress asked about her health, she replied "that she felt as strong as the Pont Neuf."

Then she turned to the little usher who had *mis*-announced her, and told him "to learn his part better next time," and she called him "my lad."

Then she took her place near the throne among the court ladies who giggled and laughed.

Now Catherine Sans-Gêne could not and would not stand being laughed at. She was vexed, but she bit her lips to restrain the expression of her anger.

"What are they better than I, these odious women," she thought. "Oh, if the emperor was only here that I might tell him what I think of his court."

A man approached her, looking like a cross between a priest and a bandit.

"Madame la Duchesse does not recognize me," said the man, bowing low.

"Not exactly," said Catherine, eyeing him with some instinctive suspicion and dislike already, "yet I think I have seen you somewhere before."

"Madame la Duchesse saw me years ago," continued the man, "when she was not a——"

"Oh!" cried Catherine, interrupting him, "you mean when I was a laundress. Oh, don't hesitate to say it, man; I keep my laundress dress yet, and my husband keeps his old sergeant clothes."

"Well, then, I did meet madame years ago, at a public ball at the Waux-Hall," said the stranger, whose face, as Catherine looked at it, grew more and more familiar. "A magician prophesied at the ball that you should become a duchess—you are one."

"While you, monsieur?" asked Catherine.

"I have the honor to be minister of police."

"Ah! then you are Monsieur Fouché."

"At your service, Madame la Duchesse," said Fouché with his lowest bow. "Permit me, madame," he continued, "to take the privilege of old acquaintance. You seem to have some enemies and would-be rivals here," looking at the court ladies. "Let me warn you against giving them the advantage by some slip of the tongue or temper; *comprenez-vous*, madame?"

"*Oui!* Monsieur Fouché," answered Catherine. She really could not but dislike this man, but his advice was good, and perhaps he might help her at this moment.

She suggested it to Fouché frankly, and he, with his catlike smile, having his own purposes in view, agreed to pull her through.

"I will be infinitely obliged to you, monsieur," said Catherine; "you know I left the flatiron for the canteen, and the canteen wagon for the court. It is not so much to be wondered at, if I know but next to nothing of the last."

"Well, Madame la Duchesse, watch me, and when I tap my snuffbox with my two fingers, consider it a danger signal and *stop*."

"Ah! Monsieur Fouché," cried Catherine, "I shall watch you like a hawk; I shall not for one moment lose sight of you or your snuffbox."

"Don't mind *me*, madame," said Fouché, "only my *snuffbox*."

And this arrangement having been made, the two followed the empress and partook of a collation.

But the unkind remarks of her female companions and critics pursued Catherine even in the supper-room.

The sisters of the emperor, the queen of Naples and Elisa Bonaparte, turned a cold shoulder on the duchess of Dantzig.

The queen of Naples showed behind her fan a note of Catherine's to the court costumer in which she had spelled satin "catin."

Then she told a story of how Catherine, having missed a diamond, had herself searched *all* the clothing of a suspected workman, till she found her stolen jewel.

Elisa mockingly turned to Catherine to get her own version of this affair, and Catherine would have fallen into this trap had not Fouché tapped upon his snuffbox.

She comprehended at once what Fouché meant, and what Elisa would have done; but she made up her mind to give her enemies of the court circle a lesson here and now—a lesson which they would not be likely to forget. "I suppose Monsieur Fouché," she said to herself, "if he knew what I was going to do, would tap harder than ever on his snuffbox, but I don't care; I am not called 'Sans-Gêne' for nothing."

Without pause she advanced into the very center of the court circle, and looking at the two sisters of the emperor, who for awhile seemed to have forgotten their own quarrels to mock and make woman's war on *her*, said to Caroline Bonaparte, "Your majesty," and to Elisa, "Madame la Princesse."

All knew "something" was coming. In vain Fouché tapped on his snuffbox. Catherine Sans-Gêne could not have been "stopped" now by the emperor himself. "You seem to make sport," she cried, her eyes flashing, her voice resonant, clear as a bell, "because a poor woman like myself was able to discover a thief; but then, he was a poor thief, an humble thief; he wasn't a marshal, nor a court lady, who take everything they can get. Probably I *was* wrong in arresting a poor devil, when other thieves, who wear coronets, pillage the empire and despoil our country."

All who heard her, everybody in that brilliant assemblage, were paralyzed, motionless with amazement or anger.

"Ah!" continued Catherine Sans-Gêne, "the emperor is good—too good—so good that he is weak. He does not care for money, he never did. I knew him when he lived on next to nothing a day, but he lets those he has favored and elevated rob him at will. It is not the servants or the work-people in the palace that should be searched, but the do-nothings and the sovereigns."

Her voice shook with anger. She, strong in her own and her husband's honesty, denounced titled thieves unsparingly.

Caroline of Naples was herself as audacious as beautiful and unprincipled; she was proud, too, and sneered at Catherine.

"Madame la Duchesse is thinking of that era of republican virtue when one was suspected if one happened to wash one's hands, unless indeed one happened to bė a regular laundress."

The queen spoke bitterly, sarcastically, and as she thought, triumphantly.

But Catherine Sans-Gêne now shouted forth, trembling with patriotic more than with personal anger:

"Do not dare, queen though you may chance to be, do not dare to insult the soldiers of the republic. They were all heroes, and my husband was one of them. They fought for country and for glory, not for rewards or plunder."

She paused as if to gather strength, but it was to make a new and telling point. "Ah! our emperor, God bless him, he will miss the soldiers of the republic, and he may need them some day. When he seeks for friends among such as you, in hours of danger, he will only find kings, queens, princes, princesses, marshals and noblemen—by title—who will in his hour of need, take heed only of themselves and their thrones."

Every word spoken by Catherine Sans-Gêne struck home.

The Princess Elisa said to the queen of Naples: "Come, sister, let us leave this. Who can tell what more may be uttered by a laundress, whom our brother's weakness has made a duchess."

Fouché approached Catherine. "You spoke rather too strongly, Madame la Duchesse," he said, with his slow, cold smile. "You would not stop though I warned you on my snuffbox."

"Never mind, Monsieur Fouché," replied Catherine

Sans-Gêne, now Duchess de Dantzig, "I shall tell all to the emperor, and when he knows all I think he will endorse what I have said."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE RUSSIAN ALLIANCE—THE AUSTRIAN ALLIANCE—THE DIVORCE.

FRANCE, on the 22d day of June, 1807, was everywhere victorious and full of glory. Lannes, Murat, Ney—were names for soldiers to conjure by.

Napoleon once said of Ney: "He is not a man, he is a lion."

Jena, Friedland, Austerlitz, all three victories; Austria, Prussia, Russia, all three conquered.

Napoleon was now hailed by his soldiers, "*L'Empereur d'Occident.*"

He had been victor alike, in the East and in the West. But after war peace and negotiations. The Man of Destiny dreamed of an alliance with Russia for awhile. He hoped to marry the Archduchess Anne, the sister of the czar, Alexander.

But in February, 1810, weary of ruse or delay, he broke with the czar and sent an autograph letter to Francis II., of Austria.

It was the most momentous of letters. For in it he solicited through Berthier the hand of the Princess Marie Louise of Vienna.

He had already determined on divorcing himself from Josephine. For she remained childless, and the other schemes for an adopted heir to his dominions did not please him; he wanted a son.

Josephine had long feared the long-delayed blow.

True, she held a certificate of her religious marriage, given her by Cardinal Fesch, and she counted on the steady, though no longer passionate attachment of Napoleon.

But one day, summoned by the archchancellor Cambacérès, she presented herself before the emperor.

The interview was as stormy as it was short.

It took place after dinner, on November 30, 1809. When the coffee was served the emperor took his cup from his page and dismissed him.

Husband and wife were alone together for the last time.

Napoleon spoke of his determination to obtain a divorce, and gave his reasons. He tried to be calm.

Josephine was profoundly agitated, stammered forth her love, reminded him of happy hours in the past.

But Napoleon intrenched himself behind the mask of a cold manner.

"Do not try to soften me," he said; "do not think to change my resolution. I shall always love you, but policy demands that I part from you—policy is all head and no heart."

Josephine, with a cry, fell on the floor senseless.

Napoleon called for M. de Bausset, his chamberlain, and the two men carried the already ex-empress to her chamber.

The emperor sacrificed love and happiness to what he thought was policy. It was an error for which he was punished cruelly thereafter.

His "luck" left him with Josephine.

The divorce papers were signed at the Tuileries, on the evening of December 15, in the midst of an august and solemn assemblage.

Napoleon, taking Josephine by the hand, read with tears (and the tears were real) a paper, prepared by Cambacérès, announcing his resolution. He gave as his only reason for a divorce his desire for a son by a second marriage.

It had been arranged that Josephine was to read a reply, prepared for her, to this declaration, but tears choked her utterance. She passed the paper to M. Regnauld de Saint-Jean-d'Angély, who read it in her stead.

In it she accepted the decree of divorce with resignation.

The paper being read, Josephine added one touching sentence of her own—the inspiration of the moment.

"I am glad," she said, "to give the emperor this proof of my attachment and devotion. I think it is the greatest proof the world has ever seen."

Josephine, by her attitude and conduct at this period, atoned for her early faults, and in consideration thereof posterity has been far more lenient to her memory than it would otherwise have been.

She has been looked upon ever since as the victim of Napoleon's ambition.

On Saturday, December 16, the consular senate divorced the unhappy though famous pair, and at eight o'clock Josephine left her husband's palace for her own separate establishment at Malmaison.

It was a dark, a dreadful night; the sky seemed covered with a funeral pall.

The Reuil road, one of her favorite rides as empress, now looked leafless and somber.

Her son, Prince Eugene, accompanied her.

The emperor himself, overcome by tender, mournful memories, had left the Tuileries for the night, and passed the weary, lonely hours till morning at the Trianon.

Two days later he called at Malmaison, tried to comfort Josephine, kissed her farewell, and then pushed on the preparations for the second marriage.

Talleyrand and Fouché, two inseparable traitors, and Metternich, the Austrian minister (of whom Cambacérès remarked, "He has all the material for a statesman, he is such a liar"), schemed day and night to give the Tuileries a young empress. And their schemes succeeded.

As for Francis Joseph of Austria, he did not hesitate to sacrifice his daughter to save his crown.

Napoleon, now that he was to marry a *young* woman began to change his habits and to give more care and time to his toilet. With a view to please Marie Louise he ordered a suit of foppish clothes from that soldier-dandy Murat's tailor.

But after all, when the clothes were sent to the palace as per order, he would not wear them.

Young wife, or no young wife, Napoleon would not appear ridiculous.

So spite the court tailor (Léger's) offer to remake the suit, he sent it as a present to his prospective brother-in-law, the Austrian prince.

But he stopped wearing boots with spurs, and ordered a superfine pair of shoes from a ladies' shoemaker.

And then he sent for Professor Despréaux and took lessons in the waltz. He intended to dance with his bride.

He inspected the Tuileries critically. It must be in some portions refurnished. It had been good enough for him and for Josephine, but for Marie Louise, no.

While on one of his tours of house criticism, he met Lefebvre. Now Lefebvre had liked, and at this time missed, Josephine; besides, he hated to see the emperor of France wed a princess of Austria. It boded no good.

And then he didn't like the idea of a *divorce*. Married people should stick together, child or no child, like himself and Catherine.

Life to his notion was a battle, and comrades should not part in the middle of a fight.

But the emperor seeing the duke of Dantzig, took him around his palace, showing him the new harp he had bought (Marie Louise played the harp), and the new jewels (Marie Louise doted on diamonds), and finally confided to him the news that he, the emperor, intended to allow the new empress a thousand francs a day pin money.

But Lefebvre seemed to think that this was too much, and that after all, the most valuable thing he could ever give any woman was—himself, the great Napoleon—and that all the treasures in the world were naught compared to the glory of being the spouse of the emperor of the French.

"Flatterer," said Napoleon.

"No, sire," said Lefebvre, "I say but what I think. I do not know how to flatter—don't want to know. Like my wife, I am myself somewhat *sans-gêne.*"

"Ah!" exclaimed the emperor, "as to your wife, I want to talk to you about her. Come dine with me to-day, we can talk at dinner."

And he led the way to the imperial dining-room, whither Lefebvre followed him, somewhat unwillingly and wondering greatly.

"What can the emperor want to say about my wife," he muttered; "has Catherine been quarreling with his sisters again?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LEFEBVRE CONQUERS NAPOLEON—THE FLAMING HEART.

THE dinner of the emperor was fully prepared, the table being set in one of those little dining-rooms which the great man vastly preferred to the grand dining-hall.

To-day's dinner to which Lefebvre was thus unexpectedly invited was simple, but elaborately served.

The guest noted that his imperial host was becoming more of an epicure lately, and lingered longer at table than had been his wont.

It was another sacrifice for the sake of Marie Louise. "She is a German, and as the Germans eat much and eat long, I suppose I must try to do the same," said Napoleon to Lefebvre, and as Lefebvre liked eating, he was pleased with this new departure.

But to-day his uneasiness interfered with his enjoyment. "Why has the emperor brought me here to talk about my wife?"

When the coffee was served, Napoleon asked Lefebvre a leading question. He wanted to know what people generally thought of his divorce?

Lefebvre endeavored to evade the question. Finally he told the emperor bluntly that most of his old soldiers regretted it, simply because most of them had risen along with Josephine, as well as with Napoleon himself, and they "had got used to each other," whereas they all dreaded more or less the aristocratic Marie Louise, who might despise them for their low origin.

Napoleon assured him that his future empress would always honor his faithful adherents for their services.

"Yes," said Lefebvre, "but how about our wives?"

"Eh? yes," impatiently answered the master of Europe, "but your sacred wives have not, like you, won battles. They——"

"Sire!" cried Lefebvre, daring to interrupt even the emperor, "they are the best part of our lives, they inspire us to win the rewards your majesty gives."

"Yes, yes, I know, Lefebvre; but some of these good wives make very peculiar court ladies. Why," his majesty asked abruptly, "did *you* so foolishly marry when you were only a sergeant?"

"Sire," replied Lefebvre, like the man and husband he was, "if I have made a mistake I have never discovered it."

"You are a true and noble heart, Lefebvre," said Napoleon earnestly. "I believe in your words as I do in your deeds, but even you must own that for the duke of Dantzig your wife, good as she is, is out of place. She is provincial, she is still a washerwoman."

"Sire," replied Lefebvre, "she loves me, I love her, and nothing can make me forget how happy she has made me."

"Still it is too bad you married in those young days of the revolution," insisted the emperor.

"Still, sire, it is a fact, and it is unalterable," insisted Lefebvre.

"*Unalterable*," repeated Napoleon, then meaningly, "do you really think it cannot be altered?"

The marshal shuddered a little, he began to see Napleon's drift. He stammered out: "Catherine and I are united for *life*."

"But," said Napoleon quickly, "so were I and Josephine."

"Aye, sire," replied Lefebvre, "but you are different. You are the emperor, I—" he really did not know what to say.

"Seriously, my dear Lefebvre, have you never considered divorce?" asked the emperor.

"Sire," answered his faithful subject, "I consider a divorce as a——" Again he knew not what to say, although he knew what he meant to say.

Then to his astonished follower, the emperor proposed that he, Lefebvre, should procure a divorce from his wife, as he had procured one from Josephine, and then he, the emperor, would find his favorite marshal-duke a more fitting partner from the old aristocracy.

Napoleon went on to argue the wisdom, nay the necessity of this measure, and some of his arguments were very ingenious and eloquent. He was a master pleader as well as a master fighter, a most able casuist, and he might have convinced many a brighter man than the one he was talking to.

But he produced in this instance no impression whatever on the man he was talking to, though this man all but worshiped him.

"Sire," said the duke of Dantzig, "send me to the end of the earth, to Africa, or to Siberia; dispose of me as you will; shoot me if you like; deprive me of the rank you have given me; but love Catherine I must; live with her, as well as for her, I shall.

"Sire, even if I incur your displeasure, I shall *not* divorce my wife.

"She is Duchess of Dantzig and Maréchale Lefebvre by *your* desire, but she shall always be Madame Lefebvre by *mine*."

Thus for the first time in his life did Lefebvre, the duke of Dantzig, resist his emperor's will.

Napoleon intently watched him.

"You are a model husband as well as soldier," he said at length, but coldly, almost sternly. "I do not agree with you, but I respect you, nor am I a tyrant; do as you will, it is your affair. We will not mention the matter again. Cleave to your wife, but warn her to hold her tongue; she shall not introduce before the future empress of France, reared in the imperial palace at Vienna, the *argot* of her class. Go, Monsieur le Duc, I must see the minister of police; return to your housekeeper." Lefebvre withdrew stunned. As he passed out Napoleon shrugged his shoulders and uttered the single word—"imbecile."

Lefebvre really felt uneasy as to the ultimate result of his resistance. He did not feel sure as to how the emperor would take it. On his return home he found Catherine in the agonies of the toilette, trying on a new gown ordered for the approaching imperial nuptials.

But she let her dress drop on the floor as she ran to greet her husband. She noted, however, at once his anxiety and asked forthwith, in her blunt, direct way:

"Has anything happened to the emperor?"

Already it had been hinted abroad that Napoleon was to be assassinated. Catherine could imagine no greater misfortune—save the loss of Lefebvre.

Her husband assured her that the emperor was well, but that he had had a difference with him. Catherine was sorry, alarmed. It was dangerous to defy the emperor, he could avenge disobedience and he would. "But what did you differ about?" asked Catherine.

"About *you*," answered her husband.

"About *me*, impossible," said Catherine.

"It is true; and *what* do you think he wanted me to do with *you?*" asked Lefebvre.

"How do I know," said Catherine, "unless he wanted you to send me to the country. If so, do not differ with his majesty but agree and thank him. We can be very happy together in the country, dear."

"Yes, Catherine, but the emperor don't want us to go anywhere *together;* he wants us to separate."

"What! separate in time of *peace?* What ails the emperor, Lefebvre?"

"I don't know, or rather, I *do* know, Catherine; but what do you think he wants *me* to do?"

"To lead another army, my great Lefebvre, or to become a governor of some State, perhaps, why not, a k——"

"No, not anything like that, Catherine, he wants me to——"

A pause.

"To what?" (another pause) "out with it, man."

"To marry."

"To *what?*"

"To marry again."

"Again, and *me?*"

"Oh, he wants me to divorce *you*, Catherine."

"Divorce! oh, Lefebvre, how abominable in the emperor; and what did you say?"

"*This*," and he opened his arms.

Catherine threw herself into them. They embraced passionately, and they vowed once more that naught but death should part them.

Each sustained the other, despite the vague fear both had of the emperor.

Catherine, then still holding her husband's hand, led him to a sofa, and sitting down side by side, one told and the other listened to the details of what Napoleon had said at the dinner, and then both guessed, as best they could, at his reasons.

Catherine was in the clouds as to the great man's motives. "Does the emperor think because *he* is divorced that the whole world must follow his example?" she asked indignantly. "Lefebvre, I begin to fear our emperor has gone mad," she remarked vehemently; "mad on this subject of a marriage with a real bred and born emperor's daughter."

Lefebvre would have it that "the emperor had his reasons." But both agreed on one point—he should not carry out his ideas with them.

Catherine, woman-like, was very anxious to know whether the emperor had hinted at any particular grand lady whom he wanted Lefebvre to marry, and breathed freer when assured in the negative. "I would make it very unpleasant for that particular grand lady," she thought.

"Ah! I told our emperor I loved thee, Catherine," said her husband, as they talked with renewed tenderness, re-embracing her, "and none but thee. I told him, dear, how we had been happy together, how we had spent our youth together, and that we had but one dream—to lead our existence together to the end, till some stray bullet should send me to join Hoche, Lannes or the rest, in the wars gone by."

Catherine, blushing like a young girl with love and pleasure, nestled in her husband's arms. Suddenly she seized Lefebvre by the wrist, turned back the cuff of his uniform, pushed back his shirt sleeve, and revealed on his bared arm the tatooing representing a heart on fire, with the words: "To Catherine, for life," all in blue marks and all indelible, unerasable.

"Don't you remember, dear?" she said, "you called this 'your wedding gift.' There it is still, and there it still will be," she almost shouted triumphantly. "How on earth could you ever marry any fine foreign lady, an archduchess or princess, with *that* on your arm? What would any other woman say and do, if she saw that, I should like to know? What a scene she would make to be sure. I can see her now almost sniffing, 'and who pray, Monsieur le Duc, may this Catherine be?' Ha! ha! no, no, my dear old François Lefebvre, you never could marry any other woman with that on your arm."

"Well, for the matter of that, Catherine, probably my other arm wouldn't suit the fine foreign lady of yours any better," said Lefebvre laughing.

And turning back the other cuff, he displayed the tatooing-marks upon the other arm, "Death to Tyrants," which legend had been inscribed on his flesh ever since the memorable 10th of August.

"Ah, see, Lefebvre, we belong to each other for life, love," said the completely happy Catherine, as she laid her head upon her husband's breast.

"Yes," said the marshal, "yes, my love, for life."

"Ah! if the haughty, foolish emperor who wanted to part us could but see us *now*, Lefebvre," whispered Catherine softly.

And then husband and wife more than ever united by this attempt to separate them celebrated the last battle, and commemorated the great victory gained by Lefebvre over Napoleon.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE ARCHDUCHESS—THE IMPERIAL WEDDING—NAPOLEON'S JEALOUSY—FOUCHE'S DISGRACE—CATHERINE'S NEW HAT.

MARIE LOUISE of Austria had been simply reared, and though as proud as Lucifer to a parvenu (as she and hers ever considered Napoleon), she was gentleness itself to her imperial circle.

She looked upon her marriage with Napoleon purely as a political affair, and really thought more of her dog Keisu, or her young chevalier, the Count de

Neipperg (with whom she had become acquainted under rather romantic circumstances at her father's court in Vienna), than she did of the emperor of the French.

De Neipperg had met her one day in the royal park at Schönbrunn, and had saved her from accidentally drowning in the lake, while trying to pluck a favorite flower. He had met her frequently after this, having become a member of the Austrian emperor's official family.

Napoleon was just a little jealous of Marie Louise's dog, though he had the animal sent to Paris, to be the pet companion of its mistress, but he *was* really jealous of De Neipperg, who had accompanied the archduchess and her suite to the French capital, and he made it advisable for the young gallant to return forthwith to Vienna.

The imperial wedding had been twice solemnized with the greatest possible pomp, once in Vienna, by proxy, and once in Paris, and Napoleon did all in his power to render the ill-starred marriage, based on a divorce and a broken heart, a happy one. He endeavored to please his young bride in every way, but in vain. She never really liked Paris, and she could "scarcely endure" Napoleon, who never felt himself secure of her fidelity. He was sure from her ample physique that she was destined to become a mother, and to bring him what he most desired, an heir, and with that he endeavored to be content. But he was always jealous of De Neipperg, and ordered his secret agents to see that he was kept away from France.

He had his own political and state troubles, despite the consummation of his second marriage. A plot to assassinate him was discovered, in which the secret society of the Philadelphes already mentioned was concerned; in this plot General Mallet, Marcel, Renée and others were implicated, and about this time Fouché, chief of police, and now duke of Otranto, fell under the imperial displeasure. "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown," proved as true an adage in the great emperor's case as in all others.

Such was the position of affairs when a grand hunting party was arranged by Napoleon in honor of some German princes visiting Paris.

The hunt was to be a state function, and the duchess of Dantzig had ordered for the occasion a superb, and what she herself called "a stunning" toilette.

"Here is Madame la Duchesse's new hat," said her maid Lisette, to Catherine, on the day before the hunt. Catherine was trying on her new costume just then before the mirror. The main elements of the costume were to be a very long skirt, a coat with metal buttons, and a cocked hat.

The hat had arrived with the rest of the suit; the lady was dissatisfied, she found it too tight.

"I can't get myself into it," laughed Catherine. "It will burst, or I will faint. I shall be laughed at, I suppose, whichever happens." She almost sighed, then laughed again. "What do I care any way what they say or do, those moths of the court; I know them too well to care for them; who are they any way? I *would* like to give that Queen Caroline a piece of my mind if I could get hold of her; I would remind *her* of her early days. She has reminded me of mine often enough. I have sworn respect to the emperor and to the new empress, for his sake, but I haven't sworn allegiance to this Caroline—this Madame Murat; I guess not—Madame Murat didn't gain the battle of Austerlitz: But, oh, that hat! Lise, my girl, let me look at it."

She took it from her maid. "It seems to me pretty bad," she said disdainfully.

"I do not find it so," said the maid admiringly.

"Bah! you don't know anything about it, Lisette," cried Catherine, "nor for the matter of that, do I," she added. "Who brought it?"

"The hatter's clerk," said the maid.

"Let him come in," said Catherine.

And the duchess turned again to her looking-glass, trying to adjust the hat to her head.

The hatter's clerk was shown in.

Catherine shrieked as she saw in the mirror the face of the clerk.

"Leave us!" she cried to her maid.

"Ah! I guess Madame la Duchesse recognized in the hatter's clerk somebody she knew in her early days when she was a laundress," thought the maid.

And the maid was right. For Catherine in the hatter's clerk had recognized—De Neipperg.

"You in Paris! you here at Compiègne," she exclaimed, in utter astonishment. "You in this disguise! *Ciel!* what does it all mean?"

Then De Neipperg hurriedly explained:

"I am here on an important errand for the archduchess—I mean the empress," he said. His errand was indeed important. Napoleon had some time before this missed a ring from Marie Louise's hand, a ring which he himself had given her, but which she, on De Neipperg's hurried banishment from Paris, had given to him as a souvenir. The empress had told the emperor that she had lost the ring, but he did not believe her.

What rendered Napoleon specially suspicious was that the empress lost the ring about the time that he had found Marie Louise and De Neipperg seated together in a summer house in the palace grounds—a discovery which had been the direct cause of De Neipperg's exile.

It was necessary that this ring should be returned to the empress, that she might say she had found it again. De Neipperg at Vienna had been notified and had hastened secretly to Paris to return the token. He had at once on his arrival hunted up Catherine, tracked her to Compiègne, bribed the hatter to let him play clerk, and here he was.

"And from here you must go back at once to Vienna," said Catherine with decision. "If the emperor finds you here, you will be lost, and what is perhaps of even more importance, the empress will be compromised."

"Ah, duchess, I had hoped," said De Neipperg, "that you would be my friend to help me to see the empress once more."

Catherine said promptly, unhesitatingly: "No, sir, do not count on *me*. See," she continued, "this is no longer the tenth of August; I am now the Maréchale Lefebvre, Duchess of Dantzig, and my husband and I owe all we are to the emperor. Give me the ring; I will see that it is given to the empress, but go away yourself."

"But tell the empress for me," said De Neipperg earnestly, "if ever she is in trouble to send for me."

"I will carry your message, sir," said Catherine, "but it strikes me as utterly unnecessary. Young man," she added proudly, "the wife of the emperor of France, over whom the Goddess of Victory ever watches, whose throne is surrounded by prostrate kings, is not likely to 'be in trouble.'"

"Ah, madame—ah, Catherine," replied De Neipperg, "prostrate kings may rise again to revenge their too-long servitude. Let your emperor beware, a storm is gathering; it will break upon his head."

"But this storm of yours," said Catherine, "cannot come from Vienna. Your emperor, man, is our emperor's father-in-law."

"True, but Francis of Austria has no real love for

Napoleon Bonaparte. It is policy only that unites them. The tie will break and Austria will join Russia, Prussia, England, to dethrone and to destroy your emperor."

"But our emperor will destroy *them* all," cried Catherine confidently. "But we waste time talking, you must go at once."

De Neipperg was resolved to remain and see the empress, but he thought it best at this time to pretend to acquiesce with Catherine. "I will obey you, madame," he said. But at this moment the maid outside announced M. de Remusat, the emperor's chamberlain. "Admit M. de Remusat," said Catherine.

"Now I must be once more the hatter's clerk," thought De Neipperg. "So madame is satisfied with the hat," said he aloud, as the chamberlain entered.

"Quite so," cried Catherine equally loudly, "quite so; and you may present my compliments to your chief."

So saying the duchess of Dantzig seated herself to receive with due dignity monsieur the emperor's chamberlain.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE FAITH OF THE LAUNDRESS—THE MAMELUKES OF NAPOLEON—THE DEBT OF THE CANTINIERE IS CANCELLED.

Monsieur de Remusat bore a formal order in which it was tersely stated that "the emperor wished the duchess of Dantzig to come to him at once in his study."

Catherine hastened to dress. She knew that an emperor does not like to be kept waiting.

She found Napoleon busy delivering orders and signing papers; he seemed nervous.

Then he read the newspapers fiercely; they were the foreign journals, containing scandals about himself and his sisters.

One paper hinted at De Neipperg's having been, by the emperor's jealousy, compelled to leave Paris in a hurry; another journal alluded to the quarrels between Caroline and Elisa.

Catherine felt that she had been sent for at an unlucky time. She braced herself for what might be to come, and she fortified herself by looking at a bit of old-time, yellow paper, looking like a letter, which she had put into her bosom before leaving her apartments.

Roustan, the emperor's faithful servant, was on duty at the study door.

An aide-de-camp had announced the duchess of Dantzig and had retired.

Catherine on entering had bowed profoundly.

She waited, herself becoming rather nervous, it must be confessed.

She was not altogether Catherine *Sans-Géne* in the presence of the emperor.

It was very quiet in the imperial study, only a clock ticked on the mantelpiece. There was no other sound save Napoleon's impatient exclamations as he read the newspapers.

Suddenly the emperor looked up and saw Catherine.

"Ah! there you are, Madame la Maréchale," he said brusquely; "I hear fine tales of you, my fine madame. What was the last one? Well, it is always the same thing, with variations. Always rough language, crude expressions, mistakes which get into the papers, and make my court ridiculous. I don't blame you so much—you can't help it; you are only ignorant; but I am sorry that Lefebvre married while he was a sergeant."

The emperor paused a moment. Catherine stood with beating heart and pursed lips, biting her tongue to keep it still. The great man took a cup of coffee, at a table near by, and then proceeded:

"You cannot remain longer at my court, madame; it is impossible. You must leave here and leave Lefebvre—get divorced. It will not alter your title or your privileges; I told Lefebvre all about it; did he tell you?"

"Yes, sire," said Catherine, "he told me all."

"What did you say?" asked the emperor.

"Why, I laughed first *at* and then *with* him," answered the duchess.

At this reply, in his surprise, the emperor dropped his cup of coffee. It fell with a loud metallic clang against its solid silver saucer.

"What!" he cried; "well, but what did Lefebvre say? what did he do?"

"Why, sire," answered Catherine, "he kissed me and vowed he would never obey you in this."

"Do you dare to speak of disobedience to *me*," cried the emperor.

"Sire," said Catherine firmly, her hands on her hips in the old fashion, "you are our master, our emperor; we owe you everything. But although you can send by a nod and a sign five hundred thousand men to the Danube or the Vistula, happy to die for you, you cannot make us two, Lefebvre and I, cease loving each other; you cannot part us. If you even think so, you are mistaken."

Napoleon listened speechless. This was new language for him to hear; he changed the subject somewhat. "But what do you say to the stories I have heard about you," he asked.

"*What* stories, sire," calmly inquired Catherine.

"Did you not insult the queen of Naples, and my sister Elisa?" he cried impatiently, angrily. "Can I tolerate such impertinence? have you no respect for the emperor that you thus show all lack of it for the members of his family?"

"Sire," answered Catherine quietly, "you have been grossly misinformed. I insulted no one, I defended myself; but your majesty's sisters, sire, *they* insulted the army."

"Insulted *my* army! what can you mean?" almost shouted the emperor, rising from the chair he had just taken. "Who dared insult the army?"

"Sire," said Catherine proudly, "*both* of your sisters outraged the army in *my* person. For I have been a soldier, sire; I went to the wars with Lefebvre as cantinière of the old Thirteenth Light Infantry."

"A good regiment," said Napoleon.

"True, sire," said Catherine, "and I have seen service at Verdun, Jemmapes, with the army of the North, the army of the Mozelle, the army of Sambre-et-Meuse. Why, sire, I have been through eighteen battles."

"You have done well; I congratulate you, madame; I respect you, madame," said Napoleon emphatically. "But," he added, "I don't remember Lefebvre ever telling me this."

"Why should he tell you, sire?" asked Catherine. "Has he not glory enough for *two?*"

"I was wounded once, sire," she added, "I would not have mentioned it only you brought this subject up yourself."

"Wounded, where, madame?" asked Napoleon, really interested.

"In the arm here," showing the scar of a wound on her fair, white, plump arm.

Napoleon kissed the arm over the wound; he would have kissed it a second time, but Catherine withdrew it from his eager lips.

Suddenly she turned to the emperor and asked him, as familiarly as she would have spoken to him fifteen years before: "Do you not remember a visit I paid you long ago, on the tenth of August, in Paris? I called on you at your little room in the Hotel de Maureaud. Don't you really remember?" seeing Napoleon had really forgotten. "I came to bring you your washing, you needed the things."

The emperor looked puzzled, then half smiled, he began now to recollect. "You were then?" he inquired.

"A laundress," said she.

"Ah, yes, true," said he.

"Yes, and somebody in your palace here owes me for his washing yet. Will *you* pay me, sire?" she asked, smiling.

"I—pay you?" cried the emperor, "are you mad, woman?"

"No, sire, but I think you will pay me," she replied confidently. "My debtor was a poor man then; he is a rich man now, and I think an honest one, who will pay his debts."

She laughed merrily, and she pulled from her ample bosom the little old bit of faded yellow paper, which looked like a bill or a letter.

And it *was* a letter—about a bill—about the bill for washing done by Catherine Upscher, laundress, for Captain Napoleon Bonaparte of the artillery.

She handed the emperor of the French the bit of paper, which turned out to be an old letter which he, when an ex-captain, had written to her, when a laundress, about his indebtedness, promising to pay her when——

"Ah, yes, that was I who wrote that letter," said Napoleon, as he seized it. "Ah! how that crumpled paper and that faded ink bring me back my youth. Then indeed I was poor, alone, with none to believe in me, yet *you* believed in me even then, you, a simple laundress. Ah! now I do indeed remember you—you were as kind as you were clever. Ah! madame, believe in me again, that the emperor will not again forget."

Napoleon was profoundly affected by this little incident; all his anger was gone.

"But stop," he asked, "had you not some other name—some nickname?"

"Yes, sire, they called me Catherine Sans-Gêne," answered the ex-laundress.

"Ah! true, I recollect, and I remember once Lefebvre alluded to it in my presence. And now, Madame la Duchesse de Dantzig," he said, resuming his imperial tone and manner, "I shall see to it that my sisters shall never reproach you with your humble origin again. If it is a fault, you shared it with Murat, with Ney—*eh*—and with *me*. By the bye," he continued, gliding back into the familiar style again, "before we part how much do I owe you, Madame Sans-Gêne?"

"Three napoleons, sire," she replied gayly.

The emperor smilingly felt in his pocket.

"*Parbleu!*" said he, "I haven't any money with me."

"Never mind," said she, "I will trust you again." Both laughed.

"Thanks," said the emperor merrily. "But," he continued, "it has grown late, the palace is all asleep, or should be by this time; I will send Roustan with you to see you to your apartments." He called his faithful servitor.

Roustan lighted a candle to conduct madame to her rooms. He started in advance of the duchess. Then suddenly turning to the emperor he cried with an expression that sent a cold chill through Catherine's veins:

"Sire, there is some one in the gallery, a man in white uniform; he is going toward the apartments of the empress."

Napoleon became terribly pale.

A man in white uniform—an Austrian—going to the empress' apartments! Who could it be if not—if not De Neipperg, whom he had sent away.

"But De Neipperg is at Vienna, so Savary has positively assured me," he thought to himself; "I am needlessly alarmed; but then it must be some thief, some assassin. Well, *I* am awake and *he* will be caught."

So with the rapidity which characterized him on the battlefield, he signed to Roustan to put out the light.

"Get behind the door," he said to his attendant, "ready to come when called."

The imperial study from which they were emerging, was now dark; only the faint glow of the dying embers of the fire in the grate could be seen, barely light enough to show the way to the gallery.

In the darkness and silence Napoleon crept to Catherine's side and seized her by the hand.

He pressed it hard, he whispered "Hush."

Catherine trembled now, for she was sure the man in the white uniform was De Neipperg, who had not gone but lingered.

"He is doomed," she thought, "what shall I do?"

A door at the end of the gallery was seen opening.

"It is Madame Montebello," murmured Catherine, recognizing the empress' lady of honor-in-waiting.

Napoleon pressed Catherine's hand harder.

The advent of the lady of honor-in-waiting on the scene increased his suspicions. She seemed to be looking for or conducting some one.

Napoleon moved forward. Suddenly a man's voice was heard saying: "Duchess, may I pass?"

The man had mistaken his party in the darkness. His form, groping in the dark, had stumbled against the emperor.

Napoleon grasped the intruder firmly and cried: "Roustan!"

His attendant, having lighted the candle, approached.

"Ah! De Neipperg; it *is* he," cried the emperor, recognizing his rival—so he thought him.

A woman's cry was heard at the emperor's exclamation. Madame de Montebello had thus revealed her presence.

"Roustan, hold that woman," cried the emperor.

The woman was held.

Then the emperor, beside himself with rage, struck De Neipperg on the breast, denounced him as "liar, thief, wretch," and tore his orders and insignia from him. "You are an assassin, a midnight marauder; you are unworthy of these noble emblems," he shouted. He was desperate.

De Neipperg, desperate likewise, drew his sword to kill the emperor. "Death to you," he cried. Catherine threw herself between the infuriated men, but Roustan gave a peculiar whistle and three of Napoleon's Egyptian guard, his favorite personal attendants, his Mamelukes, rushed in, and disarming De Neipperg, bound him securely.

Catherine knelt to Napoleon. "Grace, sire, be merciful, be patient," she implored.

He heeded her not, he shouted for his aides.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "here is a man who has dared to raise his sword against me. Let some one summon the duc de Rovigo. This man must be tried, sentenced and executed at once. By to-morrow morning all must be over." And while De

Neipperg was led away, Napoleon in anguish turned toward his own apartments.

The duchess de Dantzig remained like one stunned. She vainly sought some means to save De Neipperg.

Suddenly Lefebvre entered, he had heard all.

"What can we do?" he said to Catherine; "the unfortunate young man has sacrificed himself. As for me, I am doubly to be pitied, for the emperor insists that as I am marshal of the palace I must preside at the court-martial which will condemn him. I must obey."

"Yet he saved my life once, Lefebvre, at Jemmapes you know."

"Yes, Catherine, I remember, and you saved *his* on the tenth of August here in Paris. What can be done?"

"Ah! at least we can give the empress warning if she needs any," said Catherine. "Here, Lefebvre, try to get as near as you can to the empress' apartments."

"That is easily done," said Lefebvre.

"Then make some sound, some noise to awaken her," continued Catherine; "call out loudly to her sentinels: 'Be careful that no one *enters the empress' rooms;* seize any one who is found *bearing her a letter, even if it be from the emperor of Austria.*' Do you understand, Lefebvre?"

"No, Catherine, not exactly," replied her faithful, brave, but not quick-witted husband. "But I will all the same obey you as if I did."

And he did obey Catherine literally, thereby accomplishing her purpose and putting the empress on her guard.

Meanwhile Catherine, looking around, saw Fouché, Duke of Otranto, now in disgrace at court, but stil the clever, unscrupulous, irrepressible Fouché.

"The very man," said Catherine, as she saw him, and she smilingly advanced toward him.

In a brief conversation she readily convinced Fouché that it was to his present interest to save De Neipperg. The count was an Austrian, a noble, and a friend of the Austrian empress and her family. Marie Louise would therefore be thankful to Fouché if he saved De Neipperg, and Marie Louise was now all-powerful with Napoleon. She could show her gratitude by using her influence to reinstate him as minister of police, and to remove his rival Savary, Duc de Rovigo, who now occupied the coveted position.

Fouché saw and seized the point at once.

"I shall delay the execution; that will give us *time*," he said to Catherine, "and time is what we want most now."

"True," said Catherine, and she began at once to plan a scheme for De Neipperg's escape.

But suddenly the emperor sent for Catherine. She found the empress' lady of honor-in-waiting, Madame Campobello, likewise standing before his imperial majesty—standing in fear and trembling—but Catherine, once as alarmed as the lady of honor, was now calm. She saw her way to her purpose.

Napoleon examined the two women like a lawyer; he cross-examined them, he watched them, while he plied them with questions; but he extorted nothing suspicious from Catherine and nothing at all from Madame Campobello.

"I must know," he said to himself, "if my wife be true or false. My crown, my scepter, for a proof that she is true."

But his examination of the two women eliciting nothing, his suspicions were allayed.

At last he said to Catherine: "So you think, Madame Duchesse de Dantzig, that I have been mistaken in my view of M. de Neipperg's secret visit to my palace to-night. You really think, do you, that he has called here in this peculiar manner, merely to receive a letter from my wife to my father-in-law?"

"I am certain of it, sire," answered in her firmest tones Catherine Sans-Gêne.

"Oh! would I were as certain as yourself," said Napoleon.

"You will be, sire, soon," said Catherine. "Nay," she continued, "you can make yourself sure at once, this very moment, sire."

"How so?" asked the emperor, with nervous interest and anxiety.

"Her majesty is asleep, she has not been told?" asked Catherine.

"Yes—no," answered the emperor.

"Then let Madame de Montebello carry out the purpose for which she started from her room to-night when she went to see the empress, when you saw and prevented her. The empress will, of course, not be prepared for anything that has happened, and will answer as she would had nothing happened."

So spoke Catherine with assurance, knowing that ere this, in the womanly manner her own woman's wit had suggested, her husband had indirectly given the empress alike the news and her cue.

"By heavens!" cried the emperor, "you are a sensible woman. I will try your experiment at once. Only," he added almost fiercely, seizing the frightened lady of honor-in-waiting by the arm, "do not trifle with me; not a word, not a sign to warn the empress. Go on, forward, but remember, madame, I am behind you."

Madame Montebello advanced trembling. She did not know that, thanks to Catherine and Lefebvre, her majesty had been already notified in advance.

Napoleon stood, on fire with impatience and anxiety, in a corner. He clenched his hands, he grasped the back of a chair, he looked, he listened, his eyes were two balls of flame, his every nerve tingled with excitement.

Madame de Montebello had now reached the empress' room, and, as she entered, she left the door open and said distinctly: "Madame, M. de Neipperg sends me to request your answer; he waits in the antechamber. What shall I say to him?"

The empress half sighed like one suddenly aroused from a deep sleep, stretched her arms, and then gave a sealed letter, which had been lying on a table, to Madame de Montebello.

"Here is the answer," she said. "Greet M. de Neipperg kindly for me and now leave me, for I am very sleepy."

The lady of honor-in-waiting, returning, handed the letter which had been entrusted to her by the empress, to Napoleon who read it eagerly, the two women watching his face eagerly while he read it.

Then they smiled, for they saw the emperor's brow clear. They saw him press his wife's letter to his lips, they heard him murmur: "Dear Louise, she does love me." Then he went to Catherine and wrung her hand. "Ah! duchess," he said, "you were right and I am happy."

"It is well, sire," said Catherine, "but how about the count de Neipperg?"

"Let him go," exclaimed Napoleon, "but let him never enter France again." Then calling M. de Remusat he said: "Give M. de Neipperg his sword and tell him hereafter to use it better."

"Ah! sire," cried the voice of M. Savary, Duc de Rovigo, "M. de Neipperg is dead, as you have ordered."

"Dead! why this haste?" asked the emperor; "could you not have waited till dawn?"

Savary was utterly surprised at this change of base, but Fouché, Duc d'Otranto, now stepped forward.

"Pardon me, your majesty," he said, "but M. de Neipperg still *lives.* I took the liberty of ordering his execution *to be postponed* for your further instructions. So the men whom *you* told to shoot him have obeyed *me*, M. Duc de Rovigo," said Fouché to Savary. Then turning to the emperor he said: "You see, sire, the men still take me for chief of the police."

"So you *are* from this moment," cried Napoleon well pleased. "Ah! Fouché, you are the devil," he added, "you see and foresee everything."

Then turning to the Maréchale Lefebvre, he said: "It is time, Madame la Duchesse, for you to rejoin your husband. As for me, I shall awake the empress and assure her that her letter to Vienna has been forwarded."

Lefebvre now entered for orders.

"The emperor has pardoned De Neipperg," his wife said to him, "and, as you know, dear, he no longer wishes to divorce us."

"Bravo! I thank you, sire," said the marshal gratefully to the emperor.

"Lefebvre, when one has a wife like yours one keeps her," said Napoleon, smiling.

Happy in the fond faith that Marie Louise was true, pleased that he had been merciful, sure that Neipperg, through Fouché, had escaped Savary, and left Paris, Napoleon raised Catherine's face and kissed her—a mark of unusual favor at his court. "Good-night, Madame Sans-Gêne," he said.

And, rejoicing in his heart, Napoleon retired to the room of his wife, Marie Louise. All this was nine months before the birth of the king of Rome.

THE END.

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